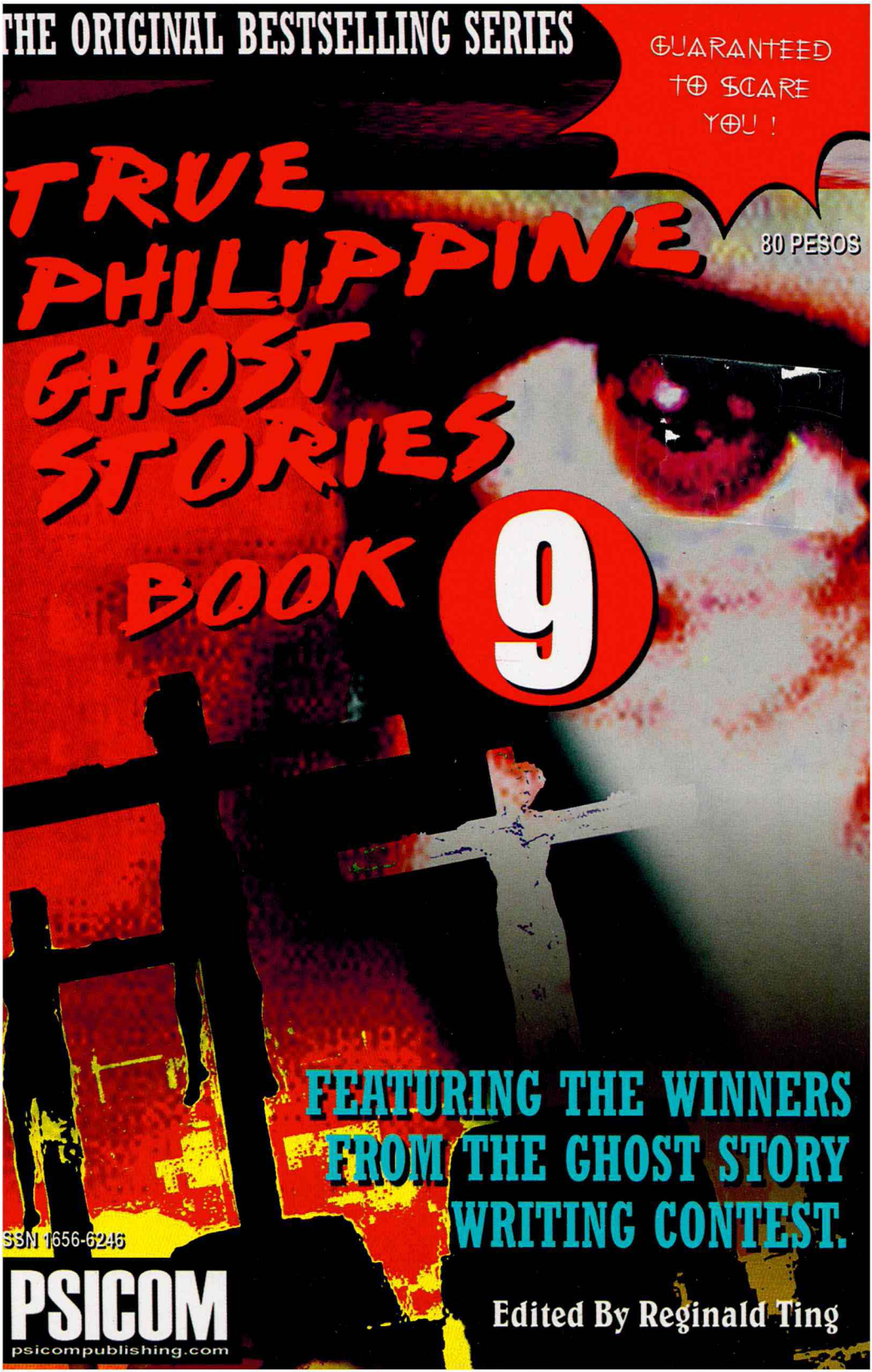
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TRUE PHILIPPINE GHOST STORIES
80 PESOS
BOOK 9
FEATURING THE WINNERS FROM THE GHOST STORY WRITING CONTEST.
Edited By Reginald Ting
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TRUE PHILIPPINE GHOST STORIES BOOK 9

Edited By Reginald Ting

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Most names of the characters in the stories found in this book have been changed to protect their real identities.

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PREFACE

When we organized the True Philippine Ghost Story Writing Contest, we never expected to get such an overwhelming response.

What you now hold in your hands is a collection of those entries, collected for your reading pleasure.

Our judges have picked out the best three of each category, and you can read them in the next few pages. We have also included randomly selected entries that we hope will tickle your souls.

Remember not to panic in case you see anything unusual. Better yet, write it down and who knows, your experience might make it to these pages one day.

The Editor

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Ghost Story Writing Contest

First Place Winner

16 years old and above category

The Final Laugh

by Katherine T. Monserate

❖ ❖ ❖

I was a college freshman, out with my classmates, celebrating the last day of the school year. We were in a bar in Libis drinking beer and eating chili squid rings when the conversation turned to ghost stories. My friends wanted to talk about the freakiest things they had seen in school.

Mark, a dormer, told us about sneaking out one night to stroll through campus then regretting it when he saw a headless priest cross the quadrangle on its way to the chapel.

Celine talked about a computer in the statistics classroom that kept printing the name Armand. The name also kept appearing on her monitor during class.

Another friend talked about hearing a baby cry in the biology lab where the fetus jars were kept.

I smiled and made comments about their stories, but deep inside I was thinking that these people knew nothing about real fear. They have never felt fear so gripping that chills you every time you remember; a fear that paralyzes and haunts you even when you're awake.

The kind of the fear that flashes a dreadful picture in front of you at odd times during the day, stunning you into inactivity for a few moments. The kind of fear that hooks itself into your heart and never lets go.

The group turned to me and asked, "What about you, Maya? Don't you have any stories to share?"

"Not really, guys," I replied.

"Hey, weren't you classmates with that girl who went crazy?"

"Yeah, what happened to her?"

"Someone said she saw a ghost."

"No, they said it was a pervert."

"That's not it at all," I said.

"So what was it?"

I decided that it was time to put the rumors to rest. I owed it to Iris and I owed it to myself. It was time to let the world know the true circumstances of her breakdown, that it wasn't her fault.

"Okay, fine. I'll tell you what happened. But after today I don't ever want to hear you talking about it again. Ever."

"Sure," everyone agreed, eager to hear the real story.

"Don't say I didn't warn you. If you ever get a class in the Comm. Dept. auditorium, don't blame me if you have to drop it," I told them.

"Maya, you're so *drama!* Come on, just tell us what happened," Celine said.

It was our class in Group Presentations and my group mates reserved the Communications Department auditorium. We came in early and found the lights already on and the air con at full blast. I dropped my bag in the nearest seat and set up the laptop while the others fixed the projectors and the posters.

As our classmates started walking in, I noticed that our group mate, Iris, was missing.

"Hey, has anyone seen Iris?" I called out. No one had seen her.

"She was with us when we walked over here. Maybe she's smoking outside," Anton said.

I went outside and looked around. There was Iris sitting on a bench a few feet away. Sure enough, she was smoking.

"Hey Iris, let's go in and practice before Ms. Perez gets here," I said as I walked over.

"Maya, I don't feel so well. Maybe you guys could do this without me," she said as she blew out a cloud of smoke.

"Come on, she'll fail you if you don't present. You can just read the first part."

She grabbed my hand and pulled me down to sit beside her. She looked down at her feet. "Maya, do you feel anything inside that room?"

"No," I said, and then added, "Why?"

She raised her head and seemed to stare at nothing. She wouldn't meet my gaze. "I have to tell you something. Don't think I'm a freak or anything."

"Iris, we don't have time for this. Ms. Perez is almost here. We can talk about it later."

"No. Before you go in there, you have to know."

"Know what?" I asked, already irritated that she was freaking out.

"I can see this girl sitting on the ceiling beam. She's on the right side of the room."

"Where? Iris, no one can get up there. It's too high."

"I can see ghosts, Maya. I can see things that no one else can. See things that no one else should." She slowly shook her head. "I see her sitting there. She watches us walk in. She laughs and she keeps on laughing."

"Why don't you just ignore her?" I suggested, as I stood up and started to walk back towards the room. I began to feel uneasy.

"Wait, Maya. You can't go back there."

"Why not?" I asked, not turning around.

"Because she keeps pointing at you."

I stopped. "What?"

"When you walk inside the room, she turns to look at you. Then she points and starts laughing. She follows you around. She swings from beam to beam, stalking you."

"That's insane," I said. I kept walking.

As we reached the door, Iris grabbed my arm. "Look at your seat. See if anything strange is going on," she said as she quietly opened the door.

The room was full of windows but my seat was hidden in shadows. It was right next to a wall that held the air con and sunlight did not reach it. Then I saw that there was a wet puddle right next to my bag on the chair.

Suddenly something small fell from the ceiling and landed on the puddle. It was a drop of liquid. Another one fell. As my eyes moved up to look for the source of the drops, I felt a cold, wet chill move up my spine. My leg muscles started to tremble and I could feel the edges of my vision turn white.

Iris' grip on my arm tightened. "Don't look up," she whispered.

I hesitated for a moment. I knew that she was right. I knew that if I looked up, I would regret it. But I couldn't help it.

I saw her. A girl sat on the wooden beams of the ceiling. She had wild black hair and a sallow gray face. She was looking down at something, then her head snapped around and she looked straight at me. Her eyes were all black. Her pale mouth opened and stretched, showing her rotten brown teeth. Her hand slowly moved up and she pointed one finger directly at me.

She started to laugh. At first it was a kind of mocking laughter with chuckles that made her shoulders shake and her finger waver. Then it built up to a high screeching laughter that made her bounce

up and down and swing her legs. She never stopped looking at me. Her head shook and her body rocked back and forth as she laughed.

I could feel the hairs on the back of my neck stand and my fingers became numb. My heart was beating so fast that I felt my pulse pounding in my head. My throat constricted and I could barely breathe.

She laughed until there was drool pooling at the sides of her mouth. It was a thick yellow slime that slowly flowed to her chin and began to drip down. It fell to the puddle on my chair. She grinned and, while looking at me, opened her hand, palm up.

She was calling me.

I shut the door and pushed Iris' hand away. I ran as fast as I could to the chapel. I sat there and prayed for an hour until my group mates came looking for me. They gave me back my things and asked if I was okay. I lied and told them I felt sick and thanked them for bringing my stuff.

My bag was wet with a thick yellowish fluid that smelled sour and rotten. I took my things and threw the bag away. I didn't want to bring home anything that reminded me of that day. My memories were clear enough.

The following week I shifted to a different course so that I wouldn't have to go back to the Comm. auditorium ever again.

As for Iris, she withdrew from school and her family migrated to a country that had better psychotherapy clinics. We never saw her again.

To this day, when I think of Iris so desperate to leave, I couldn't help but wonder...

What else did she see?

Ghost Story Writing Contest

Second Place Winner

16 years old and above category

Night Out

by Jose Carlos Malvar

❖ ❖ ❖

It was a Saturday night, and I had just broken up with my girlfriend. I found myself alone and drinking a bottle of beer – calorie free, they claim – in a popular open bar in Malate. My friend Marko left earlier that night – his girlfriend was feeling horny, and her parents were out of town. I counted the empty bottles on the table (subtracting the ones finished by Marko and his girl), and was half-surprised to find that I was already halfway through with my eighth bottle. No wonder my head was pounding.

"I bet you can't drink another bottle," said a voice, silky and smooth, from the other table. She was sitting alone, dressed in a sexy black number that showed a hint of cleavage.

I raised my bottle, and grinned at her. I finished off the bottle in my hand and signaled the waiter to bring two more – one for me and one for her.

I motioned for her to join me, and she obliged, trailing an intoxicating smell of expensive perfume as she sat on the chair I offered. She smiled. I winked at her.

"What's your name?" I asked her.

"Cecille," she said. "Yours?"

I told her my name. Our beers came. I ordered for more food, and for more beer. We talked. We danced. We touched. More beer

came, more food. People started going home; it was starting to get cold.

"Come on, I'll bring you home," I offered. I had stopped drinking beer an hour ago to make me sober enough to drive. "Don't say no, please don't."

She smiled. "All right. My place's nearby, anyway."

Her house was on a dark street somewhere in Paco. The neighborhood was already asleep, it seemed. The house itself was covered in a blanket of inactivity. Even the leaves were unmoving, afraid to cause the smallest disturbance to the peace.

"You live alone?" I asked, turning off the engine.

She took a moment to answer. "I... I live with my mother." Her hesitation was pretty obvious.

The house was made partly of wood, partly of stone. One of those old houses in Manila constructed just before (or maybe after, I'm not sure) the Second World War. There was a pungent, unkempt smell when she opened the gate. I could distinctly smell urine when she opened the door.

Total darkness enveloped us when we entered the house. Outside, even crickets could not be heard. I could hear no air-conditioning or electric fans working, but the interior of the house was cold. There was a definite chill in the place. I folded my arms across my chest and followed her in the dark.

From the corner of my eye, I saw some movement at the top of the stairs, a barely discernible shift of shadow and darkness. "What was that?" I asked.

Cecille looked in the direction I was pointing. "Nothing," she answered, unable to mask the nervousness in her voice.

She took my hand and guided me into a room. She turned on a lamp, and the room was filled with light, albeit insufficient. In the dim illumination, I was able to make out a tiny bed, a ratty dresser, and a few other personal belongings, all in disarray.

She surprised me by planting a kiss on my lips. I felt her tongue explore my mouth. I reciprocated. She pressed harder. Then she pulled back. "Stay here. I think I forgot to close the door."

Alone and cold in her room, I made my way to her bed and sat. I took off my shoes and lay down.

Then I saw a shadow pass by the door.

"Cecille?" I called out.

There was no answer.

"Cecille?" I called out again.

I heard footsteps coming towards the door. I breathed a sigh of relief. "Geez, Cecille. You scared me. I thought..."

I froze in mid-sentence.

The figure standing in the doorway was not Cecille. It was an old woman, dressed in a long, flowing dress that was being blown by the gentle breeze inside the house. Her hair was in disarray. Dirt was all over her face.

She looked me straight in the eye.

"I... I..."

She put one foot behind her and moved backwards, moving back into the dark. I heard her footsteps moving away from the room.

A short while later, Cecille returned with a glass of water. She smiled. "You look like you just saw a ghost," she told me.

"I think I just did," I answered, hoping to make light of the situation.

She toyed with my hair. "Shhh... that was just my mother. Don't mind her. She's been acting weird for months now. Treat her like she's dead," she said and giggled.

I kissed her nose. Then I moved to her mouth, tasting the aftertaste of the beer we had in the bar. I felt her kissing back.

Then I heard somebody crying.

"My mother," Cecille whispered in my ear. "Don't mind her," she repeated.

But the crying kept getting louder. And louder. Until it felt like it was inside my head, resonating in my skull. Inside the room, as I felt her hands caressing the sensitive parts of my body, the temperature dropped. I started shivering.

The crying had turned to wailing. The room got so cold, I could see my breath.

I pulled back. "I'm sorry," I told her. I put on my shoes, and made my way out of the room. "Let's do this some other time."

Scared, I almost ran towards the door. I yanked it open and hurried to my car. It was already 3 in the morning.

An elderly woman, dressed in a ratty duster and house slippers, was smoking a cigarette in front of my car. "Oh, dear. I'm sorry," she half-apologetically smiled at me. "Are you a nephew of hers?"

I looked at her quizzically. "Of whom? Oh, I'm sorry. I was just... ah..."

"Of the old woman who lives there. Are you a nephew of hers?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. I'm just... ah... a friend of her daughter."

She nodded. She walked towards me and squeezed my arm. "It's so nice to know that young people like you care enough for the elderly. My husband and I used to be good friends with Mrs. Reyes – the woman who lives there. Such a pity what happened to her. You know, she used to watch our kids when my husband and I would be at work. That was back when everything was good for her, and she still hadn't lost her mind. Tsk, tsk. Such a pity."

She took a pull from her cigarette, and glanced at the house. "Isn't it a bit late to visit? No offense, but people usually visit Mrs. Reyes in the daytime."

"Oh, no, ma'am, I wasn't visiting her," I said and grinned. "Her daughter invited me in."

The woman stopped smiling and her eyes widened. She threw her cigarette to the ground and stomped on it. She wrapped her arms around her. She walked away from me and from the house.

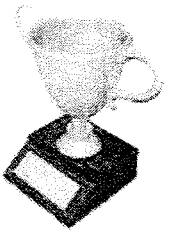
"Ma'am?"

She looked at me with fear in her eyes. "Her only daughter died a month ago. Mrs. Reyes lost her mind and has been living alone ever since."

Ghost Story Writing Contest

Third Place Winner

16 years old and above categor



Signs

by Ma. Cassanova P. Belga

❖ ❖ ❖

Lo, my significant other, was a member of his college's Journalism Society Basketball Team. As one of their games during the AB Sports fest was about to start, something creepy happened that gave everyone goose bumps. I was not really there when this thing took place but later I was witness to what made Lo's tranquil world turn into horror.

It all started when Ace, Lo's classmate, took a picture of Lo with his camera phone, a Nokia 7650, while waiting for their ballgame to start. Everything was ordinary then. Their fellow Journalism students cheered as they held cartolina papers where the words GO! GO! JOURNALISM! were written. Others yawned, maybe because boredom had gotten to them. A normal setting for a basketball game in which there was nothing to be afraid of, right? Wrong.

After Ace took Lo's picture, he was surprised by what he saw. When he viewed the photo, Lo's image was not there. The only things present in the photo were the the basketball court and Arjay, another classmate, who was beside Lo when Ace took the picture.

Everybody was shocked and stunned. Tension replaced what was supposed to be an enjoyable mood. I was at work then (I was a working scholar) and I had only learned about the incident when I went to

the basketball court. When I arrived, I noticed that everyone was in a furor.

"*Anong meron?* (What's going on here?)" I asked.

"*Hanapin mo si Lo* (Look for Lo)," Ace said, showing me the picture in his phone.

I was startled when I realized that Lo was indeed not there; only a hologram-like figure of him was present. I asked them how they did it but nobody could answer me. It was really freaky. How could that have happened? Ace's cell phone had no special effects that could have altered the photo.

"*Sabi nila, maghubad daw ako, tapos magpabatok ako sa isa sa mga kakilala ko. Mas mabuti nga raw kung magsusuot ako ng pula para pangontra sa kung anumang puwedeng mangyari. Natakot nga ako* (They say that I have to strip off my clothes, and then have someone I know hit me on the head. It would even be better if I wear something red to counteract whatever may happen. I got scared)," Lo told me.

I called up his mother, *Tita* Weng, to inform her of the events. I got a negative reaction from her; she thought that it was just some stupid joke.

That's it! I couldn't do anything about it, I thought hopelessly.

But the day didn't end there. There was more.

I called up Lo at around 7:30 that night to check if he was all right. *Thank God,* I sighed, when he picked up the phone and talked to me. He told me that other scary things had happened to him when he had arrived home.

"*Natatakot nako rito! Pag-uwi ko kanina, nakita raw ako ni Ma na walang ulo kaya kung anu-ano ang pinagawa sakin. Kesyo pinahubad lahat ng suot ko – damit, singsing, bracelet, lahat! Pinaligo ako tapos pinakain ng hard boiled egg atsaka pinainom ng isang basong tubig. Lahat daw iyon utos ni Tito Noel* (I'm getting scared here! When I got home, my mom saw me without a head so she had me do a couple of things. She had me strip off all that I was wearing – my clothes, my

ring, bracelet, everything! She had me take a bath, had me eat a hard boiled egg, and had me drink a glass of water. It was all ordered by uncle Noel)," he said in a trembling voice.

Tito Noel is Lo's uncle, who is strongly believed to be a bearer of the third eye. Much evidence, especially regarding supernatural goings-on in their clan, strengthened this claim.

Another shocking incident happened that same night. At around 8:30 in the evening, while washing their clothes, *Tita* Weng spotted a big brown butterfly (considered a manifestation of someone who had passed away) hovering above Lo's clothes. Assuming that the butterfly wasn't anything mundane, she talked to it and asked what news it brought.

"*Anong meron? May masama bang mangyayari kay Lo?* (What's going on? Will anything bad happen to Lo?)" *Tita* Weng asked.

Upon hearing this, the butterfly swooped into the roaring whirlpool in the washing machine, which literally destroying the poor creature. With that, she knew that something bad was about to happen. Terrified was the best word to describe *Tita* Weng at that moment.

We thought that the weird occurrences were over. We thought wrong.

The next day, Earlie, a friend whom we are fond of calling Mother Earlie, approached us and told us something that added tremors to our already shaky world. She had a premonition on the morning before the "picture-taking" incident. According to her, as she was about to take a bath, a headless figure flashed in her vision. She immediately sent a text message to all her relatives and close friends to warn them. She said that the headless figure was supposed to be a warning, of someone having a date with death. She never thought that the figure was Lo's, was it?

With a friendly stroke of life, maybe of luck as well, Lo still lives a normal life. He hasn't gotten hurt but one thing is certain – he is still frightened with what had crossed out the outline of his existence.

Ghost Story Writing Contest

First Place Winner

10-15 years old category

Room 209

by Ma. Izza L. Puey

❖ ❖ ❖

Four years ago (back in 2000) my mother had an operation and was confined in the Hospital. We stayed on the second floor, Room 209. Our family doctor didn't want us to stay in that room but we had no choice because it was the only room available.

On the first night of our stay, at around 9:45 p.m., the doorknob kept turning, as if someone was twisting it like a screw. Slowly at first but then it kept going faster and faster until it finally popped out. The door slowly opened and a gust of wind breezed into our room, leaving the door open. Nobody was outside.

On the second night of our stay, at around 9:30 p.m., we were getting ready for bed when we heard a child's cry coming from the bathroom. Our helper searched the bathroom but found no one. But when she looked in the mirror, she saw a reflection of a child's face in the window, dripping with blood. When she looked at the window, the face was gone but the sound of a child's laughter filled the whole room.

The next morning, our family doctor conducted her daily rounds. We told her what happened last night and we requested a transfer to another room. She wasn't shocked or surprised by our request. She told us that she, too, had a similar experience when she was confined to this room.

She was reading the bible at around 10 p.m. when the bathroom door slowly opened. A group of hooded people in black clothing paraded in front of her, floating in midair. They were all looking at her, some with faces you could barely make out and some without any faces at all. They were carrying a large black coffin and the guy in front was carrying a big black cross. They stopped as the coffin creaked open and a woman in white jumped out. She had a mass of black hair that covered her whole face but a pair of red eyes shone through the thick tresses. Our doctor maintained her courage and kept praying the Apostle's Creed over and over. The hooded people continued their parade, passing through the closed window, leaving the doctor open-mouthed with the bible still clutched in her hands.

When our family doctor left the room, she sent in a pregnant nurse to check my mother's temperature. Our helper liked to gossip so she told the nurse what happened to us and to our family doctor. The nurse also shared with us similar experiences that happened to other patients who were confined in this room.

According to her, an old man was confined in this room last year because of bronchitis. His watcher went down to eat lunch in the cafeteria, leaving the old man alone. Just as the old man was drifting off to sleep, the bathroom door opened and a couple wearing old, dusty wedding clothes came out. They were carrying a red pillow in their hands and suffocated the helpless old man with it. When his watcher returned, he saw the old man dead, his face already a shade of blue.

Back in the late 90s, a pregnant nurse aborted her baby in the bathroom of this very room. Maybe she felt guilty so she jumped out the window. Her body was found in the parking area the next morning. Nurses in this hospital say that her soul still wanders around the hospital grounds. Maybe the child that our helper saw yesterday was the spirit of her baby, jealous that he was deprived of the right to live.

"But how do you know all this?" I asked the pregnant nurse.

"Oh, I have my sources," she replied with a wink.

As she left the room, we saw a trickle of blood run down her leg. Out of curiosity, I asked our helper, "How did she know the story of that old man when he did not live to tell it? Could it be...?"

Ghost Story Writing Contest

Second Place Winner

10-15 years old category

School Horror

by Marielle Donita T. Tayona

❖ ❖ ❖

"Was our school a former cemetery?" I would ask my classmates. They would say, "No." But if that were the case, then why on Earth would some students see unbelievable sightings?

The stories I'm about to share are not meant to blemish our school's name or confuse people. I share them to tell you that no matter how peaceful our school seems, there are still beings that are lurking in every corner of our school, looking for help or maybe just instilling fear.

Story 1: Decapitated

Jay-R went to the restroom before the morning classes. It was 5:00 in the morning and it was still quite dark. When he came out of the restroom, he saw a decapitated head crawling towards the classroom next to the restroom!

Jay-R couldn't scream and he could only run away.

Story 2: The Headless Lady

Cornelia, my not-so-close friend, told me this story when we were

still in Grade Five.

A couple of years ago, she and two of her schoolmates went into a room that looked like a bedroom in the Home Economics building. There was a cabinet with a big mirror there. When they looked in the mirror, they saw a woman combing her hair, but the woman did not have a head!

Of course, they ran away as far as possible from that building.

When Cornelia told me this, I shook in fear because that part of the building was near the place where we have Home Economics class.

Story 3: A Strange Sound

It was late in February 2004 when this incident happened. I had just finished my class and it was a quarter to 6 in the evening. My friends and I stayed in front, near the flagpole. As my classmates watched other students practice for the coming Field Day, I idly observed the Home Economics Building, which was just behind the flagpole.

I then heard a sound coming from the said building. The sound was like a piano-made sound effect used in horror movies. I scanned the building but I didn't see anyone inside.

I remembered that there was piano inside the building, but who could be playing it? The building closes at 5:30 in the afternoon.

The reason why that someone played that horrible sound is another question.

Story 4: An Urban Legend

This urban legend was told to me when I was in Grade Three. According to my classmates, if you shouted "Anna" three times in the bathroom beside our classroom, the spirit of a young girl would stare back at you.

After they told this to the class, some of us got frightened every

time we would use the restroom. Even I got goose bumps whenever I went to that restroom to take a leak.

Later on, we realized that the urban legend was not true. But some students attest that there really was a white lady inside the restroom.

Story 5: My Dream

I still could not forget this dream about lost souls residing in our school, which I dreamt a year ago.

In the dream, I was with my brother, and we got separated in one of the school's alleys. I grew tired and I slept at the end of that alley.

When I woke up, I was surprised to finding myself in front of my Grade Three classroom. I wondered how I had moved to that place.

When I looked to my left, I saw something weird by the handrail, which was in front of the said classroom. A strange "thing" came near, and when I saw what the "thing" looked like, I found myself shaking and unable to move because of extreme fear!

That odd "thing" I saw was a white lady What was really scary was that the lady's face was very pale. She had glassy eyes and she didn't have a nose or a mouth.

When the lady was just a step or two from me, I was totally paralyzed; I couldn't run or scream. My breathing became more rapid and my heart pounded faster. I thought I was going to die.

What a relief to know that I was just in my bedroom! I was happy that I had successfully woken up from that horrifying nightmare!

Story 6: Poltergeist

It was in the year 2000 when this happened, back when I was in Grade Two. We had no permanent building at that time because the building where we were supposed to stay in was under renovation.

Our teacher was out of the room and my classmates were talking

to each other. Some, me included, stared blankly at the walls of our temporary classroom and idly listened to our classmates' non-stop chatter.

The whole class was surprised when the door to our room slammed on its own! Some of my classmates even said, "Hey, there's a ghost in our room!"

I wondered how it happened – I thought that it was a nasty kid playing a prank on us, but there wasn't anyone outside our room or behind the door. Others thought that it might have been a strong gust of wind, but it was incredibly warm outside.

It was then that a thought of a poltergeist flashed in my mind, but I told no one about it.

At present, I still do not know what message the ghosts in these stories want to tell. Maybe our school is really a home for them, where they come and go, from one side to another, looking for a living being to help them find the place where they belong.

I hope that someday they would accomplish their mission or find their way back home, so that, finally, our dear school could have some peace.

Ghost Story Writing Contest

Third Place Winner

10-15 years old category

Hide and Seek

by Israel R. Defeo

❖ ❖ ❖

A friend of mine, Rhea, shared me her story of when she was still living in Isabela. She had witnessed her uncle commit suicide.

"Mama, what's happening?" Rhea said.

"Rhea, stay here. Don't go outside. Wait for me here, okay?" Rhea's mom told her.

"Where are you going, Ma?" Rhea asked.

"Your uncle committed suicide."

"Where?"

"At the bridge. Okay, I will go now."

"Okay."

After two days, her uncle's body hasn't been found, but the police were still searching. Rhea told me that her uncle took his life because of certain difficulties in life.

Every night, Rhea would dream about her uncle: her uncle would cover her face with a pillow, making her think that he wanted her to be with him; sometimes, her uncle would squeeze her neck. Every time she tries to shout but no sound comes out.

One afternoon, Rhea and some of her cousins were instructed to

get firewood. They went to the forest down by the bridge. After looking for some time, Rhea got tired of walking.

"Wait, I'm tired. Why don't we sit for a while?" Rhea said.

But the sun had started to hide behind the clouds and her cousins were getting afraid. "Rhea, we can rest at home. If you still want to rest, you can stay here by yourself," said Rhea's cousin.

"No! I will go with you," she said.

When they were on their way home, Rhea heard something. "Did you hear something?" she asked.

"Yes! Someone is here. Maybe he is lost. Let's help him," said Rhea's cousin.

When Rhea and her cousins saw a man begging help, they shouted and ran. It was their uncle, hanging from a tree. His face was scratched and full of blood. His clothes were a mess and covered with blood.

"Aaahhh!!!" they cried.

If you were Rhea, what would you have done?

Doubles

by Arianne Gutierrez

❖ ❖ ❖

I don't know what it's really called or if there is a technical term for it, but it happened to me four times.

One summer, my 3-year-old cousin spent her vacation at our house. One time I scolded her because she spilled orange juice on my assignment. She cried and she went up to the room we shared. I followed her a few minutes later and found that she had fallen asleep.

When dinner was ready, I called out to my cousin from the foot of the stairs.

"*Halika na, kakain na* (Come on, it's time to eat)," I said when she passed.

But she pretended not to see me and went straight to my brother's room. I was puzzled so I went up the stairs to see what she was doing in my brother's room. I was surprised, scared, and mystified to find that there was no one there. My body was cold and sweating. I went to my room and found my cousin there, still asleep.

The second time it happened to me, it was getting dark and I had just came home from work. I passed through the back door and I saw my brother enter the comfort room.

"*Anong ulam?* (What's for dinner?)," I asked him. I was tired and hungry.

He did not reply. I waited for him to turn on the lights in the comfort room but he never did. I shrugged and went to the living room to greet my parents.

"*Kararating lang ni Gie galing sa school, maliligo na agad, baka mapasma iyon* (Gie had just arrived from school and he's taking a shower so soon, he might have muscle spasms)," I told them.

My mom looked up from the paper she was reading and said, "*Hanggang 9 p.m. pa siya sa school, mamaya pa siya uuwi* (He'll be in school until 9 p.m., he won't be home until later)."

Not believing my mom, I went to the comfort room to chew out my brother. But there was no one there; only cold, dry air was in the bathroom.

The third time was when I was getting ready for work. A part of our living room had been converted into a small salon with huge mirrors. As I was doing my last minute make-up, I caught a glimpse of my other brother in one of the mirrors. He looked like he had just woken up. He walked by to charge his cell phone on the table behind me. Not bothering to look up, I continued to choose the right shade of eye shadow to apply.

Thinking that he had shifted his schedule at his job at the call center, I asked, "*Maganda yata shift mo ngayon. Pasok ka na?* (It seems you have a nice shift now. Are you off to work?)"

There was no reply. His cell phone wasn't even on the table.

I went to the kitchen and asked the maid, "*Gising na ba si Vin?* (Is Vin awake?)"

"*Mamaya pa pasok niya, 10 a.m. pa nagpapagising sa akin* (His work isn't until later, he asked me to wake him at 10 a.m.)," she replied.

Finally a similar incident happened just last week. We had all stayed in my parent's room for a night of bonding. We brought in our own mattresses and slept on the floor. I woke up alone the next morning; my parents and brothers had already gone to work or school. Still very sleepy, I saw that the door was ajar and that the maid was staring at me like she had been there for quite some time. She looked like she had just woken up herself because of her red eyes and ruffled hair. She must have been trying to wake me up. Funny, though,

because she didn't say anything; she just stood there staring at me. I ignored her and went back to sleep.

When I woke up, I apologized to her for ignoring her when she was trying to wake me up. "*Paano mo naman kasi ako magigising e hindi ka naman nagsasalita, nakatingin ka lang. Anong akala mo, magigising ako dahil lang sa naramdaman kita?* (How can you wake me when you don't say anything, you were just looking at me. What do you think, that I would wake up when I felt your presence?)," I told her.

Our maid went pale. "*Ate, hindi pa ako umaakyat sa itaas. Dito na ako natulog sa sala simula nang magising sila. Ikaw lang ang nasa itaas simula kanina* (I haven't gone upstairs. I slept here in the living room when the rest of your family awoke. You were the only one upstairs since this morning)."

How is it that a spirit can copy the form of a mortal? And why do they do that?

The Accident

by Rosemarie G. Papa

❖ ❖ ❖

I don't know if you will believe this, but this is a true story.

My birthday is January 6, usually the last day of the Christmas Season, the Feast of the Three Kings. Back in 1997, as I was turning twenty-eight, I decided to celebrate my birthday by the beach. It may be stupid to think about now, since it was very cold at that time. It was a spur of the moment decision, because I usually celebrate by having a party at home. I wanted that day to be different, I didn't know why. If I had only known how different it was going to be!

I told my friends about my plan and we settled on Polanguit, San Narciso, Zambales. I had been there many times and I was used to the place. Since it was a four-hour drive to Zambales from Manila, I wanted to leave at around 6 in the evening of January 5 because I didn't want to celebrate my birthday on the road. I believe in the old cliché that birthday celebrants were prone to accidents. At that time, I didn't know how true that would be.

After some delays, we finally boarded my car, a 1976 Lancer. It was already 9 in the evening. There were nine of us: three sat in front, including the driver (me), and six sat in the back. You could just imagine how we all managed to fit in my small 2-door sedan.

Since it was the first time for my friends to travel to Zambales, they watched the road intently, and pointed out odd things for everyone to gawk at, particularly cemeteries and funeral parlors. I stopped them from pointing out the funeral parlors, thinking it wasn't nice to notice those things while on the road. They were also on the lookout

for the big statue of the Virgin Mary that was built on a mountain beside the road because that place was said to be an accident-prone area. What was also unusual was the fact that we noticed a lot of odd and eerie places – a dark restaurant, an abandoned bar, a dilapidated building, cemeteries, funeral parlors and even the Ulo ng Gapo statue in Olongapo, commenting that we might notice that it didn't have a head; our imaginations were running wild and there was a full moon out. It was like we were already having a premonition of what would happen to us. Perhaps the fact that three of us were psychics – two others and myself – could explain that. But we didn't heed the warning signs. *Matigas lang siguro talaga ang ulo namin!* (Maybe we were hardheaded!)

It was around 11:30 in the evening, as we were passing through Olongapo, that we decided to stop for dinner. We chose a restaurant that was made of wood and had capiz windows. We were the only diners there. Looking back, the place looked eerie but at that time we didn't notice; we were all so happy while having dinner. The waitresses at the restaurant noticed our boisterousness and even joined in singing me a Happy Birthday.

We finally left the restaurant at 1 in the morning. The waitresses were shocked when they saw the small car we were riding. One of them commented, "*Isa na lang, sampu na kayo!* (One more and you'll be ten!) We did not know how near that joke was to the truth.

Before we left, we asked one of the waitresses to take our picture. In one picture, we were all laughing; in another, we acted sad and serious. When the pictures were developed, we were shocked to find that we were actually ten in the picture. The figure of a girl with short hair dressed in a "nightie" was standing between two of my friends in the second row, but she was floating above them. We didn't know that somebody had already completed our number to ten. Plus, there were a lot of orbs in the picture.

We reached San Marcelino Bridge by 2:30 in the morning. The road was not slippery and I wasn't driving fast – only at 60kph – when we suddenly felt that the car was "flying." I felt that the right rear

wheel of the car was not touching the ground. My friends were already panicking and one of them shouted, "*Break mo! Break mo! Lumilipad tayo.* (Hit the breaks! We are flying.)" Since I was the driver, I had to keep my cool and I did not do what she told me to; I knew that if I slammed on the brakes the car would overturn. I just tried to control the car.

Suddenly, the passenger beside me pointed at something in front of us. It was a very bright light, round and almost glowing like fire. No, it was not the headlights of an oncoming car. To this day, I still don't know what it was and its reason for being there. All my friends prayed loudly. The car lurched and spun counterclockwise three times. While the car was spinning, I placed the gear in neutral and tried to go with the flow. My only fear at the time was that an oncoming vehicle might not see what was happening and crash right into us. Luckily, none was in sight.

After three turns, we were thrown headlong into the cliff to our left. Good thing we bumped into something. When we looked, we saw three women with very long hands, holding on to each other, forming a triangle. One side of that triangle prevented us from plunging over the cliff. We bounced off the triangle and were thrown backwards, crashing into a wooden electric post. If we hadn't crashed into that, we would surely have gone off the cliff.

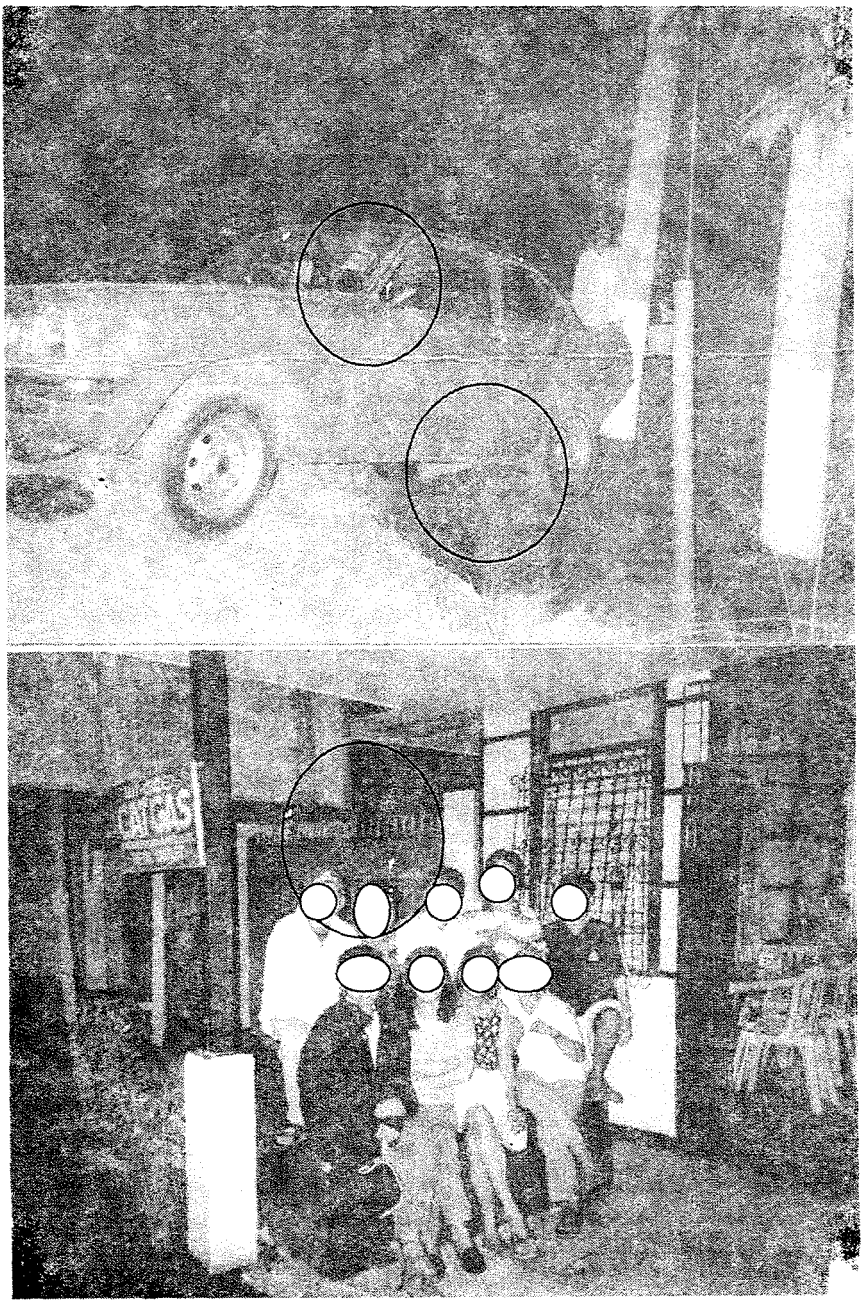
I turned off the engine and looked at my friends. Everything inside the car was in chaos – the radio was ripped off and was thrown to the rear by the force of the crash, and papers flew everywhere. I touched my body, afraid that I might already be a soul. Then I checked on my friends. We were all alive and nobody was hurt. My friend opened the passenger side door and they all went down that way. I opened my door but, when I was about to go out, I felt air beneath my feet. The car was hanging over the cliff, its rear supported by the post. One of my friends saw me and quickly pulled me to the other side. When we were all outside, one of my friends got the camera from me and took pictures of the car from all sides. It would have been for insurance purposes but something in the pictures prevented us from using it for insurance claims. Do you know why? The camera

captured the distinct figure of the ghost of my father inside the car and a shadow of his head beneath the rear supporting the car. He was sitting in the driver's seat. I think he was the one driving the car when I couldn't control it. The car was originally his and I only started driving it when he died in 1987. A lot of orbs were also around the car.

We were shocked to notice that the villagers of Zambales were already trying to help us. The mayor was already there, an ambulance had arrived, and the police was there too. Apparently our crash site was near the house of the mayor of that town. Everybody asked how we were, the villagers soothing our frayed nerves. Since I was the last one to get out of the car, I was still in a daze as to where we were. As one of my friends embraced me, I looked at the scene. It was then that I realized how close we were to death, that it would have taken us only mere seconds to die. I started shaking and couldn't stop. All my friends were crying in relief. When we were finally able to talk to the villagers, one of them told us that the bridge was an accident-prone area. They even pointed to the breaks in the fence by the road where accidents have occurred. They said that they have gotten used to hearing the sound of screeching automobile tires in the area. In fact, the last accident just happened 6 days ago, on New Year's Eve. It was a truck and the driver was killed, his passenger losing one of his legs. They told us how lucky we were to survive without any injuries at all. Just the same, the mayor forced us to ride the ambulance to have us checked at the hospital. She then offered us her home for the remainder of the morning.

By 6:30 in the morning, I went out and looked at my car. I tried to look for tire marks on the road while trying to recall what happened. I looked for other dents on the car besides the one in the rear – particularly the front because I knew we had bumped into something – but there were none. There were tire marks in the middle of the road where we spun but there were no tire marks that would indicate how we came to crash against the post. It looked like the car had literally gone "off-road."

What really made me wonder was the fact that the car was facing



the bridge, since we were traveling down the bridge and the car had turned counterclockwise. How did it end up with its rear against the post and its front going up the bridge? I still could not explain that to this day.

The mayor had my car pulled out of the crash site. There was no damage to the engine and we were on our way back to Manila by noon. Everybody was still in shock and we decided not to go to the beach anymore. With what had happened, who would still think of it, anyway? Besides, we thought that we had just been spared from an accident and if we pushed our luck we might get into another accident at the beach. We just decided to go home and tried to celebrate what was left of my birthday. As soon as we got to Manila (which took seven hours, because I was driving at a snail's pace), the first place we went to was a church. We prayed for being saved from that accident.

I could not say that I was not traumatized by the accident. I am still driving up to now; I thought that the only way to face trauma was to "get back on the horse." Each time I drive at night or each time I pass by a bridge during the first year after the accident, I would remember what happened. Sometimes, I would close my eyes, afraid that the accident might happen again. All my friends had their traumas, but it has been seven years now. People forget, or at least try to.

Every year we celebrate that day, not just because it is my birthday, but also because it became everybody's birthday. It was a new life for all of us, our second life.

The Girl At My Window

by Celso C. Nieves

❖ ❖ ❖

I gazed outside my window and breathed in the fresh summer air as the dusk slowly crept through, replacing the receding light of the day. Beyond was a group of dense trees, and far beyond that was thick forest. The small homing birds noisily chirped, alighting on the branches of waiting trees. The trees swayed tenderly in the soft passing wind. Soon there was total darkness and the birds grew quiet and went to sleep. Their noise was replaced by the constant chirpings of nocturnal insects. I sat down on the floor under the window and I reminisced.

When the Japanese came, we left our hometown and evacuated to Manila because my father had a bitter quarrel with a Japanese before the war, whom we found later was a colonel in the Japanese army. After the Americans granted the Philippines independence, we returned home in 1947 and found the town almost abandoned. It had been the central garrison of the Japanese army and many residents were killed during the war. Some of the townsmen were executed on suspicion of being a guerilla or a spy, while many had left to live in remote towns.

Very few of the residents had returned, and the town was terrifyingly spooky at night. Many houses were empty. The electrical supply was only from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and the voltage was so low that bulbs glowed like dying embers. By 6 p.m., everyone had to settle down inside their homes. The streets were practically deserted and

very quiet. It was dark outside except for the widely spaced streetlights and when the moon was full. Passing under these faint lights would form monstrous shadows that could jitter one's nerves. The environment was undeniably eerie. Two policemen patrolled the place during the night. Every hour, like town criers, they loudly announced the time, giving us a sense of security. They were courteous to those coming home late, and they escorted the women and the elderly home.

My uncle, a young geodetic engineer, lived with his wife and his 2-year old son at the end of town, which was about one kilometer from our house. He asked my father if I could work with him as a rod man and computer at his residence/office. He used a mechanical manual-computing machine. I was fourteen years old then and he wanted my father's consent. Since we needed the additional income, my father agreed.

My uncle fetched me every morning in his newly owned military jeep. Together with other crewmembers, we surveyed rice fields, inheritance lots that were to be subdivided, and the like. He always brought me home late in the afternoon. During computing time, I went to the office early in the morning and went home before nightfall.

One day we had plenty of work to do and I had to stay until after dark. Since I was afraid to go home alone and my family was worried, my father came and took me home. We trekked through town, with me clinging to my father's arm the whole way. I thought every moving shadow was a ghost. Hordes of dogs came close and barked at us.

As we neared the municipal hall, its single light by its entrance illuminated a nearby coconut tree, which had two drooping palm branches that swayed menacingly. I imagined that the shadow it cast was a giant, ugly wrestler ready to pounce on us. I gripped my father's arm tighter. As we came near, the giant became a coconut tree again, but the huge black shadow still terrified me. My father was not afraid;

he was calm and he often told me not to be afraid. Soon we met the two policemen and they greeted my father by name. A little while later we were back home. Everyone was glad to see us.

My uncle asked my father if I could stay with him for a week because we had plenty of computations and plotting to do. My father consented.

My uncle's house was far from the road. It was made of bamboo frames, sawali walls, split bamboo flooring, and cogon roofing. It was raised about a meter from the ground. All the houses in the vicinity were made of the same materials as my uncle's. The nearest neighbor was about twenty meters away. Facing my room was a dense group of trees. At first I was lonely. I missed my three sisters and four brothers; we were close and we all slept in one row on the floor underneath one big mosquito net, while our parents slept on a wooden bed.

I was jolted from my reverie when my aunt called me to dinner. After the meal, I went back to my room, put on the light and lay down on the mat under the windows. I must have dozed off because when I opened my eyes, there was a girl at the window looking down at me and smiling. I wasn't surprised. I sat up and we talked intimately. She placed her left arm along the windowsill and rose up a little. While we talked she was all smiles. Soon we both said goodbye. From the weak glow of the bulb in my room, I could see that she wore a white satin dress, closed at the neck and the wrists. I forgot what we had talked about.

Barely had my head touched my pillow when I opened my eyes and I was fully awake. No one was at the window. I immediately closed my eyes and my whole being was shrouded with fear. My body seemed to be paralyzed and I could not move. My heart was pounding loud and fast. I did not open my eyes, fearing that she would return and look back down at me again.

What if she returned and called my name or made an eerie sound? What if she touched me? I was really scared to death. Oh my God,

please help me, I thought. But why I was not afraid when I talked to her? Who was she? Why was I afraid now?

God answered my prayer and I fell asleep.

During breakfast, I didn't tell my uncle and aunt what had happened that night. I told them that I was afraid to sleep in my room and I wanted to go home that afternoon. I promised to report very early every morning. I told my brothers and sisters about the girl at my window. They too became afraid. That night, when our parents rounded us up, they were amused to see eight sleeping figures in a row all covered with blankets from head to foot.

After all these years and I have gotten older, I kept thinking: who was this girl? Was she a ghost or a spirit of one of the victims of the war? Or was she just a figment of my imagination? But she looked very real. She was my age or maybe younger. There was nothing unusual when our eyes met. She was not very pretty, but she was charming. She had the sweet voice of an ordinary, happy teenager, and her smile looked sincere. Definitely, she did not look spooky. After more than half a century, I still wonder.

The House On Finance Street

by Keith Vernon B. Adagio

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In 1975, my aunt and my mom rented a house on Finance Street in Project 8, Quezon City, not knowing that the house would give them the fright of their lives.

It all started with the two maids that slept in the living room.

"Nida, stop tickling my feet!" said one maid to the other.

But when she saw that Nida was sound asleep, she became frightened and covered herself with a blanket until she could sleep again.

In the morning, the maid told my mom what happened. My mom told her that it was just her imagination.

The following night, my mom heard what seemed like someone hitting his or her head on the floor. But when she checked it out, there was no one there. My aunt, who was in another room, heard it too. Thinking that they were just tired and must have overheard it, they went back to bed.

But the incident repeated itself during the next few nights. My mom and aunt had the same thought: "Could there be a ghost in the house?"

My dad was still my mom's boyfriend then, and he would visit her frequently. While he was helping my uncle move some appliances one night, my dad saw white smoke shaped like a woman following my uncle.

"Tony, there's a ghost behind your back," my dad said to my uncle, in terror.

My uncle replied, "I know, I can feel it, but I'm just ignoring it."

The ghost then disappeared.

That night, my dad spent the night and bunked with my cousin. He woke at around 2 in the morning, and as he reached for his watch to check the time, someone whispered in his ear, "*Anong oras na?* (What time is it?)"

When my dad looked around there was nobody there and my cousin was sound asleep. My dad tried to go back to bed but he heard a murmur of Latin coming from his pillow. He immediately woke my cousin, and my cousin also heard the murmur. They threw the pillow out the window. Frightened, both of them stayed awake until the sun rose.

The next night, the tickling happened again to the two maids in the living room.

"Stop tickling my feet!" said one of them.

"No, I'm not tickling your feet," answered the other.

Both of them felt something eerie. They quickly ran to my mom.

Suddenly, there was a loud banging that came from the walls. It was everywhere – around the rooms and throughout the house.

"The walls of the house were made of pure concrete and don't have wood," said my mom, "but the banging sounded as if it was coming from a wooden wall."

They were all pretty scared and my mom said she had never encountered anything like that in her whole life. The banging continued throughout the night.

In the morning, they all decided to leave the place.

Later that afternoon, my dad came by to help my mom in the move. When everything was loaded and they were all outside, my dad closed the gate.

BLAM! Somebody threw a rock against the gate. It came from the direction of the house. My dad, though petrified, went back in the house to see who threw the rock. The house and the yard were completely empty.

I have a friend who lives in Project 8 and he knows about that house on Finance Street. I told him my parents' story and it sent shivers down his spine. He informed me that the house is still there but no tenant ever stayed there for long.

Calling The Other Side

by Melissa Marie A. Cipres

❖ ❖ ❖

You may have heard of these things before. Probably more than you would have wanted. Probably more than you would have thought. But it happened, and every time I think about it, it still makes my hair stand on end.

A few months after my uncle died, my cousin Michelle, who had been religiously scouring the classified ads and had sent about a gazillion resumes to companies whose names I cannot even remember, finally got a chance to land a job as a Medical Representative for Glaxo. As a fact of life in our country, this was a very big thing for someone who was unemployed and fresh out of college. After rigorous training seminars, reviews and crash courses related to medicine, she finally got the job.

Her work demanded not only her effort but also a lot of her time. She would often come home to my grandmother's house in the wee hours of the morning. Everyone in the household had to try and adjust to that, and, eventually, everyone there fell into a certain pattern that worked for both Michelle and everyone living at my Lola's house.

Michelle had another exhausting night and she was looking forward to crawling into bed as her ride stopped in front of my Lola's house.

"Thanks so much for the ride, I really appreciate it," she mumbled as she fidgeted in her handbag for her mobile phone. It was already dawn and most likely everyone inside was asleep. All she needed to

do was call the house to tell them that she was outside and have someone open the door for her.

While the phone rang she scanned the house, thinking of the running she would have to do to get to the door because of the pouring rain. Finally, a sleepy voice answered the phone.

"Hello?" the voice said.

"Jak? Is that you? I'm outside the house now. Could you open up for me?" Michelle said, assuming that the person on the other line was my cousin's girlfriend, Jak-Jak.

"Hello?" the voice said again in that same sleepy tone.

"Jak! Hey! Can't you hear me? I'm outside the house. Open me up. Bring some towels as well because I'll probably be wet by the time I get there," she said.

"Hello? Hello?" the voice said again and then hung up.

Michelle looked at her mobile phone, confused. She went to the call register function to make sure that she had dialed the right number. She had.

Thinking that Jak had probably heard her but was too bleary to comprehend, Michelle said good-bye to her friend and rushed through the rain to get to the door. She knocked and waited. After a few minutes, she started pounding on the door until finally *Tita* Aling opened it. Apparently, Michelle's hammering had woken almost everyone in the house and they were all there to greet my drenched cousin.

"What's wrong with all of you? I've been knocking on this door for almost forever," she said, stepping into the dry quarters of the house.

"Well, you were knocking all right. You woke everyone up," my widowed *Tita* replied, closing the door behind her.

"That would have been avoided had Jak-Jak opened the door herself," Michelle said, glaring at Jak, who had just come down and was rubbing the sleep from her eyes.

"What are you talking about, Michelle?" Jak said, yawning.

"I called you up but I guess you were too sleepy to remember. You probably fell asleep again after I called, right?"

Everyone eyed Michelle in a strange way that made her feel uneasy.

"What?" she asked.

"Michelle, the phone was cut a few days ago. We were not able to pay the bill," *Tita* Aling said flatly.

Michelle raised her eyebrow and gave a cynical smile. "Yeah, right, you expect me to fall for one of your ghost story pranks again? I don't think so."

The moment she said that, her eyes looked at the cupboard in the living room. There, to her absolute shock, was the very recognizable black PLDT telephone, its cords neatly wrapped around it. With the amount of dust it had accumulated, it was obvious that it had not been moved in a few days.

Turning pale, Michelle's eyes moved from my *Tita* to Jak-Jak.

"So, who was it that I... talked to?"

Tita Aling could only look at my dead Uncle's picture hanging on the wall in the living room.

From Here After

by Dino F. De Guzman

❖ ❖ ❖

Scientists, scholars and even artists have been constantly intrigued by the thought of having another reality, totally existing yet undeniably different from what we know. They call it dimensions and some even treat them as alternative worlds.

This may explain some supernatural events. It may be that huma souls continue to live in one of these dimensions, or there might b one alternate universe that may be called the world of the dead. Th idea began to haunt me ever since I spent three days in my uncle house.

It was an old house, two stories high and its sides where covere with plants that included several orchids. It bloomed with flowers anc when the wind blew, the air smelled sweet and yet appalling. Sometimes you could smell two distinct scents; one was floral and the other was putrid. Moreover, when I opened the gates, I felt a sudden gush of the wind coming from inside. And when I entered the front door, I was amazed at how dark it was inside even if the sun was shining brightly outside.

"What's wrong with this place?" I asked my cousin.

"Nothing, but dad used to say that there were times when he saw shadows lurking in the dark," teased my cousin.

My uncle was away for a month and he tasked my cousin Alfred to take care of the house. Actually, I was a little confused by my uncle's

purchase of the property. They had a beautiful mansion in the city, yet he decided to stay in this deserted house for almost two months. Alfred confided that it was a puzzle that bewildered their whole family, something they do not welcome especially after his mother's death three months ago.

The first two days in the house were quite normal. We busied ourselves by reading, playing cards and watching videos. It was truly a relaxing time. The following day, we went to the nearest mall and entertained ourselves with its amenities.

We arrived home just before midnight. We thought of taking a shower before going to bed. Alfred went first and I lay down on the couch. While I waited, I examined the first floor.

The bathroom was near the dining table and thick plywood divided the dining area from the living room where the couch was. A huge mirror faced the flight of stairs that led to the second floor. Then there was the peculiar bathroom door – it was worn from top to bottom. The entire house was fully furnished except for that particular door. It was rather odd because my uncle was a very meticulous man and he would not allow such a thing.

I had dozed off when a tap on my shoulder awakened me. Alfred was drying his hair with a towel.

"Hey, that was fast," he said. "I thought you were already full."

"What are you talking about?"

"I saw you eating on the table," he answered.

"I wasn't. I was waiting for you to finish while I lay here on the couch."

We looked at each other and hurriedly went to the dining area. It was empty but the funny thing was that one of the chairs was not arranged properly, as if someone had sat there. I felt a little shiver run down my spine.

"How do you explain that? I didn't do that. If you weren't responsible for it, then who was?" asked my cousin.

I did not answer. I just took my towel and went to the bathroom. Alfred didn't remark anymore and went upstairs. We did not want to talk about it.

While showering, I felt the same gust of wind that passed me when I first arrived at the house. I was cold so I closed the small window above me. I suddenly smelled the appalling scent I had described earlier. I turned off the shower and dried myself with a towel. I accidentally bumped my leg on a nearby pail. I cursed for a moment and looked in the container. It was filled with water and I saw my reflection on its surface. Suddenly a shadow passed above me. I was taken aback and I hurriedly went to open the door. But before I opened it, I made the mistake of looking at the mirror that faced the door. I saw my reflection but, in an instant, a shadow passed behind me. It was fast, and as it glided, I felt the cold wind and smelled the disgusting scent. I quickly opened the door and shouted my cousin's name.

Alfred did not expect me to be shivering in fear, but I was pale and shaking. He helped me up the stairs and asked me what happened. I narrated my experience, though he was a little skeptical about it. Out of desperation, I asked him to turn on the television and put it on some lively channel. He complied with my request and the late program finally calmed me.

We then discussed the things that have transpired and gave probable reasons for them. It struck us that we were both thinking that something supernatural was happening.

"But it can't be. Dad was able to live here for many days, and I know him too well. If he had felt something funny, he would have quickly left. But he didn't, so we might be blowing this whole thing out of proportion," Alfred reasoned.

We joked for a while as we prepared for sleep. But our laughter stopped when we heard a commotion downstairs. We fell silent and we tried to focus on the noise we heard.

There seemed to be some clanging of silverware and some scraping of plates. We heard water being poured into glasses and people were talking amongst themselves. The sounds came from the dining area.

We took courage from the baseball bat and the cue stick we grabbed. We then hurriedly went downstairs. Alfred was the first to go down. I followed and turned on the lights. There was no one in the dining room but, to our horror, the table was filled with plates, spoons, forks, glasses, and a pitcher half-filled with water. We checked the doors and windows; they were all locked.

We were scared out of our wits and we scurried to get our rosaries and the bible from our room. We turned on all the lights in the house and we switched on the radio in the living room. The radio was alive yet the house seemed to be dead silent. We were tired but we couldn't sleep. We watched the dining room like madmen. Our fear weakened us but our curiosity grew stronger as we waited for what might happen next. We left the things on the dining table untouched as we impatiently waited for the sunrise.

"Did you turn on all the lights?" I asked.

"Not the light in the bathroom," Alfred answered while he hurriedly opened its door. That was his mistake.

A sudden gust of cold wind took hold of us. As soon as Alfred flipped the switch, all the lights went off. I held on to the bible as tightly as I could.

I called out to my cousin and suddenly the lights came back on. What I saw almost made me faint. The house had changed. The radio was gone and so was the plywood. What was left was the couch I was sitting on. A different dining table was present and around it sat six

people, including a young girl and a young boy. They were eating and conversing calmly with each other, making the sounds we heard moments ago. But they did it without vigor. They were very pale in appearance, even the kids. I assumed that they were children because they were smaller in stature. However, I could not distinguish one face from the other, and could only tell them apart from their clothing.

Then I heard a shout. It was Alfred. He was cowering in fear beside the wall where the bathroom should have been. I noticed that the other people were aware of his presence. They stopped eating and talking as they stared at Alfred. They stood up and walked towards my cousin.

I wanted to stop them but I cowered in fear when I saw that their faces began to change. They became deformed, as if melted by fire while their mouths gave out a dreadful hiss. I was speechless and I started to pray.

One of the two men was nearing Alfred. My cousin was breathing heavily while his trembling hands held a rosary. The man who approached him had a limp in his left leg. Before the ghastly man could touch him, the boy tagged the figure's arm and pointed in my direction. They noticed me and I panicked. The two women and the little girl started walking towards me. But my thoughts soon changed when I sensed that the limping man was going to hurt Alfred. The man reached out with his hands, blood dripping from them. His mouth opened and a shrill voice came out as he bent over my desperate cousin.

I called out to Alfred and prepared to help. The other creatures hissed and spoke syllables that I could not decipher. I forgot my confusion in my determination to jump on my cousin's attacker. But I was wrong; the man did not even touch Alfred's shoulder. He seemed to be reaching out for something. Soon, his hands passed through the wall as he looked remorsefully at my cousin's pale face.

Alfred was facing the man and the boy was near me. Their faces seemed more ghastly than ever. A chilling wind swept over us that brought about a disgusting smell. Their faces gleamed before they gave out a horrifying scream. The cold was becoming unbearable when suddenly the lights went off and, in the blink of an eye, went on again. They had vanished, even the smell and the cold. The house was the same as before and the radio was playing again.

It took a couple of minutes before we could compose ourselves. Alfred was still in shock as he crouched in front of the bathroom door. We stayed in the living room and hardly slept as we waited for the sun to come up.

The next day, we asked the neighbors about the history of the house. An old woman told us that decades ago, the original house was destroyed by fire and a family of six perished in the blaze. Ever since that tragedy, whoever were the current owners of the house would hear peculiar noises and see disturbing shadows. When we related our story, she was perplexed. The old woman then gave praise to the heavens because she said we were fortunate to return from the world of the dead.

We soon realized that the bathroom door was a gateway of sorts; it was an entrance to an unearthly realm, maybe to that of the dead. Probably, it was a place my uncle wished to go to. Maybe he wanted to see my dead aunt once again.

Her Lover

by Isidro T. Romulo

❖ ❖ ❖

I will never forget this event in that forever changed my view on the supernatural. It happened when I was still an instructor at one of the well-known computer schools here in the metropolis. I did not dare tell this story to anyone until now.

One day, I was enjoying my vacant time from my teaching and was exploring Yahoo Messenger and the Internet. I was getting bored with the common discussion categories when I chanced upon a chatroom entitled "Depressed and Troubled." Though I did not feel depressed or troubled at that time, I entered the room out of curiosity. Besides, I might be able to help some of the people chatting inside.

When I entered the chatroom (my chat name was KapitanX), I did my usual greeting with the appropriate smiley attached to it, "Howdie strangers! ☺"

Nobody replied to my greeting. I noticed that the folks in the chatroom were indeed sending messages about their problems regarding family, relationships, school, and work. Some even expressed despair to the point of suicide.

I started greeting and addressing each one by their chat names; in that way, I thought, someone would notice me and start chatting with me. I saw a newcomer in the chatroom whose chat name was Hallow_Jane.

"Hello, Hallow_Jane, welcome to the room! ☺," I said to the newcomer.

The chatter replied back and said, "Hi, KapitanX! ☺"

"asl?" I asked. (asl means age, sex, and location)

"20, female, Philippines," she replied.

"So she's a girl from my country," I said to myself. I became more interested and I sent her an Instant Message so I can personally chat with her outside the chatroom.

KapitanX: Where in the Philippines are you right now?

Hallow_Jane: Parañaque. Bicutan to be exact! ☺

KapitanX: I see. I guess you're not depressed when you entered the room?

Hallow_Jane: What makes you say that, KapitanX?

KapitanX: You have a happy smiley attached to your message when you greeted me. ☺

Hallow_Jane: Hahaha! LOL (LOL means laughing-out-loud)

KapitanX: See? You're laughing now. That means you're not depressed.

Hallow_Jane: How about you? Are you depressed?

KapitanX: Not really. I was just there to help. ☺

Hallow_Jane: Oh? I guess I'm a lucky girl to have met you there.

KapitanX: And why is that? Do you need help? I'm here to listen.

Hallow_Jane: I'm kind of disturbed right now and no one wants to believe what I say. ☹

KapitanX: Well, not to worry, Hallow_Jane! I'm ready to listen and believe.

Hallow_Jane: My boyfriend visits me often.

I jumped to the conclusion that she does not want to be visited by

her boyfriend anymore.

KapitanX: I guess you're annoyed with him. Why not just ignore him? He'll get tired later on.

Hallow_Jane: He's very persistent. He doesn't want to stop.

KapitanX: Then maybe it's time to ask the help of the police. Tell them that the man is bothering you and he disrupts your daily activities.

Hallow_Jane: You don't understand. My boyfriend is already dead!

KapitanX: Whoa! What d'ya mean? Are you saying a ghost is visiting you?

I was puzzled with what she told me. After my question, it took her some minutes to reply.

Hallow_Jane: Yes. Do you believe me?

KapitanX: Hmm. I can't say. Are you taking drugs? LOL

Hallow_Jane: I see that you're making fun of me now. I told you my story's unbelievable. ☹ And it's not really my dead boyfriend's visits that trouble me; it's that even my family and close friends don't want to believe me. ☹

KapitanX: I see.

I was beginning to think that she was crazy or that she was making up stories. She continued with her sentiments and I read on.

Hallow_Jane: In fact, I always anticipate his presence. My feelings for him grow even stronger whenever we're together. It's just that when my parents hear the sound of my voice and laughter from my room, they always knock on my door to see if I'm okay.

KapitanX: Uhuh. Then?

Hallow_Jane: And when I tell them that Arven is with me, they say I'm crazy. They even asked a psychiatrist to come over and check on me.

KapitanX: What did the psychiatrist say? By the way, who's Arven?

Hallow_Jane: Oh, Arven is my boyfriend's name. The psychiatrist said that I'm just having a denial stage from my boyfriend's loss. He told my parents that I would get over it once I learned to accept what happened.

KapitanX: I think what he said was right. You'll get over him soon.☺

Hallow_Jane: I don't think so. And I don't want to get over him! He's the only guy I've ever loved this way.

This time I really thought she was crazy. I was starting to get bored by the conversation so I tried to change topic. I was curious as to how she looked.

KapitanX: By the way Jane, you haven't described yourself to me.

Hallow_Jane: I'll just enable my cam so you can see me through your monitor.

She did as she said. I moved my mouse pointer to a window on my monitor and clicked the "accept" button. After a few seconds, I was able to see her through a small window.

"Wow, she's cute!" I thought. She was a mestiza. Her hair was just above her shoulders and she was wearing a tight-fitting shirt. Because of this, she seemed to have big, pointy breasts. There was a television behind her, and above it was a bookshelf attached to the wall.

Hallow_Jane: Do see me now?

KapitanX: Yes, I do. I think you're pretty! ☺

Hallow_Jane: Thanks! Do you have a cam too? Can I see you?

KapitanX: Sorry, I don't have a cam, but I can describe myself to you. I am 5'9" in height, black hair, semi-chinky black eyes, and tanned skin.

Hallow_Jane: Ok. So you're tall dark and handsome! LOL

KapitanX: Hahaha! Maybe I am! ☺

I must admit, her looks really hit me hard. I did not want to waste

the opportunity to meet her.

KapitanX: Hey Jane! I want to see you in person. Can I?

Hallow_Jane: Really? I don't think so. I have a boyfriend, remember? I don't want to make him angry. ☹

KapitanX: But he's already dead.

Hallow_Jane: So?

I was amazed at how she answered me. She really believed that she could see her dead boyfriend and that prevented her from seeing me in person. Due to my persistence though, she gave in to my request. Or was it out of annoyance?

She told me that if we would meet, she would rather do it at her house. She said she was not used to meeting strangers. I had wanted to meet her in a mall, probably SM Bicutan because it was close to her house, but since I was the one requesting the "eyeball," I had to give in to her conditions.

Tuesday of the following week was our scheduled date. She gave me her address and the landmarks I should watch out for. There was no need to tell me what color dress she would wear; besides, I already knew how she looked like. She said she would be alone in the house; her parents would be at work. I never asked her if she still went to school.

I wondered why I did not ask for her number or if she had a cell phone I could text or call if ever I got lost. I guess I was confident I would be able to find her place. Besides, I can get her number once I met her.

It was noon when I entered Jane's subdivision. I saw the two-story house Jane mentioned when I reached her street. On its left was an abandoned sari-sari store, and on the right was a vacant lot. Across the house was another vacant lot.

I parked my car beside one of the vacant lots. As I got out, I saw Jane opening the gate. I wondered why she was so trusting; she did

not even ask whether I was the person she was expecting.

"Hello, KapitanX!" she said to me while opening the gate. That was the only name she knew to address me as. Jane pushed the gate open, eliciting a squeaking sound.

"Hi!" I said and waved at her. "She doesn't look crazy to me," I thought. If she was, I did not care; she was too cute and very appealing. She was wearing gray shorts and the black tight-fitting shirt she had been wearing when I saw her on my computer window.

"Come in," she said with a smile. Her teeth gleamed in the afternoon sun. It was the most astonishing smile I had ever seen.

She entered the house as I entered the gate. She left the front door open for me. I wiped my shoes on the welcome mat before entering the living room. Inside, I immediately saw the computer table and the sofa beside it. The television and the bookshelf on the wall were in front of the computer, just like I saw when I was chatting with Jane on the 'Net. Jane's picture was beside the monitor on the computer table.

Suddenly, a man entered the door behind me. I turned to him, quite surprised. He was wearing a hat, a blue Superman shirt, and maong shorts. He looked like a gardener; he was holding a small shovel and a bucket.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" the man asked.

"Hello, Sir. My name's Icy," I said. Pointing to the picture on the computer table, I said, "I'm Jane's visitor."

He frowned. "What are you talking about, son? That girl has been dead for eight months now," he said.

"Wha-what do you mean, sir?"

"Jane took her own life because she was so depressed at the loss of her lover. Just four weeks after her boyfriend's murder by a rival, she was found dead in front of the computer with her wrists slashed and her blood all over the table."

"That's impossible! She was my chat mate last week and I even saw her alive and well on my computer."

"Son, if you do not leave this house in one minute, I will be obliged to call the police."

"But sir, I really did see her alive on my computer."

"I think I would rather call the mental hospital," he said with a sarcastic grin, but his eyes were agitated with anger. I did not doubt that he was serious.

I went out the house, not looking back. I drove off, feeling perplexed and my heart beating fast. The thought of what happened lingered in my mind for a long time and I did not chat on the Internet for the next eight months.

Taxi #45

by Ronald Gary Bautista

❖ ❖ ❖

Chris and Julie were walking down the bayside road that night. It was really dark and the first vehicle to pass was a taxi. Chris waved for it to stop. The taxi stopped a few meters ahead of them. Chris approached it to talk to the driver. As he leaned down to look inside, he was horrified to find the taxi empty.

"Is it okay with the driver, Chris?" Julie called out.

Chris looked at his girlfriend. He turned back to the taxi and got even more terrified. The taxi was full of people, their eyes staring fiercely at him. Chris couldn't bear it anymore and ran back to his girlfriend.

Another vehicle stopped near them. When they saw that it was Gary, Chris immediately went inside and pulled his girlfriend in with him.

"I told you guys to wait for me at the beach party. It's not good to be walking along this road," Gary scolded the couple.

Suspecting that Gary knew about the weird taxi, Chris asked his friend, "Gary, what do you know about the taxi back there?"

BEEP! Gary honked the horn before answering. "Two years ago, the Malaya Taxi Company's car number 45 had a terrible accident on this very road," said Gary.

BEEP!

"The driver died, along with his five passengers."

BEEP!

"After the accident, rumors ran rampant that taxi #45 was seen traveling this road."

BEEP!

"The Malaya Taxi Company denied that they produced another taxi unit with the same number," Gary continued.

BEEP!

"How do you know all this?" Chris asked Gary.

"I'm a Journalism student, remember? I covered this story once," Gary replied.

Gary dropped the couple at Chris' house and said, "There's more. Some say that taxi #45 crosses the path of vehicles that travel the bayside road."

"Is that also true?" Julie asked.

"They said that if taxi #45 passes by, you honk once," Gary answered.

Chris said, "Hey! Didn't you honk many times while we were on the bayside road?"

"Yes! The taxi passed us five times tonight, and each time the taxi passed, one of them disappeared," Gary said.

"One of them?" the couple asked.

"While we were on the bayside road, the five dead passengers appeared," Gary said in a whisper.

"What? You mean you saw the five passengers on the road?" cried Julie.

"No, in my car!" Gary said.

The Necklace

by Paul Co

❖ ❖ ❖

The following story is a compilation of actual accounts, back when we were working for our old company.

It all started when Mitch found a necklace in the girl's bathroom. She was on the graveyard shift and was the only girl in the group. When she had to go to the bathroom, it was pretty evident that none of us could join her.

Inside the bathroom, Mitch placed all her toiletries on top of the sink counter. She distinctly remembered that there was nothing on the sink when she entered. But when she returned after using one of the cubicles, she found a silver necklace with a heart-shaped pendant right beside her things, carefully placed so that the pendant could clearly be seen.

The bathroom wasn't big—four cubicles on one side, and a huge mirror on the wall above a row of sinks. Mitch would hear anyone go in or out the bathroom, and she would notice if anyone else was there with her.

"Hello?" she called, looking under each cubicle, checking if someone was inside. But like before, she was alone.

Thinking that the necklace might belong to someone in the earlier shifts, Mitch took it and went back to the office. We were fooling around, having finished all our work ahead of schedule, when she returned.

"Hey guys," she said as she entered our room. "Do any of you

know whose necklace this is?"

She held out her hands and showed us the necklace, its chain intertwined around her fingers.

"Where did you find it?" JC asked.

Mitch told us how she found it in the bathroom. All of us were looking at her very oddly as she recalled how she got the necklace.

"Mitch," I said after she told her story, "you're the only girl here right now."

"I know," she replied. "But maybe it belonged to one of the girls from the earlier shifts that left late."

"The latest time the other girls left here was three hours ago," JC remarked, now looking puzzled.

"That's weird," Mitch said with one eyebrow raised. "I went to the bathroom earlier today and I didn't notice this before."

"Maybe it belongs to the other company," Dino suggested.

But Mitch shook her head and responded, "It couldn't be. The other company closes at 5 p.m. and that was over seven hours ago. Their office was dark when I passed it to get here."

We looked at each other and we all had the same idea forming in our heads: the possibility of a ghost haunting our building. I immediately set that thought aside and told the guys that it might just be nothing. For the rest of our shift, we more or less forgot about the necklace.

When the morning shift arrived, Mitch showed the necklace to Christine. "Is this yours?" Mitch asked.

Christine shook her head and asked if she could try it on. Immediately, Christine fell in love with it and claimed it as her own. "This is really pretty," she remarked. "I wish no one would claim it so that I can keep it."

We didn't mind since we didn't know where the necklace came from in the first place. We decided to let Christine have it and just

point her out if someone did look for the necklace.

But that was when the weird stuff started to happen.

The first thing we noticed was Christine's sudden change of attitude whenever she wore the necklace. Everybody in the office knew that Christine was a real bitch and that she really didn't hang out with any of us. And on the rare times that she did, she would always have a negative comment on anything and everything that we did. Now, however, whenever she wore the necklace she smiled more often and was easy to get along with. But when she wasn't wearing it she would go back to her old habits.

Other unexplainable things happened in the office, especially during the graveyard shift: mugs were "moved" from one place to another, and shadows flittered around dark hallways looking like there were people walking around. We heard strange laughing noises in the bathrooms and the elevators, even though we were alone on that floor.

I myself had a strange encounter in the elevators. Mitch and I went out to buy food at the 7-11 branch near the office. To our surprise, the elevator stopped at the sixth floor and its doors opened. The floor was dark and there was no one there. The elevator closed and resumed its descent. Then we heard voices, mostly laughing female ones, but the sound was so faint you could barely hear them.

Finally, the doors opened and we got out. As the elevator doors closed, the sound of the laughing women disappeared.

"You heard it too, right?" I asked Mitch. My voice and hands were shaking.

Mitch just nodded a reply as she eyed the elevator, which had gone back up. "Paul," she said, "this will be the last time I'm going to do a food run."

Since then, we made sure that there were five of us going out whenever we'd go buy food.

And then there were the bathrooms. The bathrooms were the worst place to be when you were alone. Mitch and Noel could attest

to that.

When Mitch moved to the morning shift, she started to experience strange things in the bathroom even during the daytime. When she was alone, the middle cubicle would flush on its own and the hand drier would turn on, even when she was three sinks away.

Noel had a similar experience, and he had this strange feeling that he was being watched in the bathroom and that they were trying to get his attention. It was around midnight when he went there, minding his own business when he suddenly heard a knock behind him. Curious, he went to investigate.

The men's bathroom was a little smaller than the women's. As Noel turned, he saw a cubicle door swaying, as if someone was knocking on it. He moved closer to see if there was someone on the other side but he found no one there. The soft knocking continued and the door kept swaying, and still Noel moved closer. As he got nearer, he suddenly felt different emotions—loneliness, anger, and then pain. He didn't understand where the emotions came from. Fear finally got the better of him as Noel ran for the exit and said a little prayer to whoever was in the bathroom.

Needless to say, none of us went to the bathroom alone anymore.

We finally realized that all these occurrences had something to do with the necklace that Mitch found in the women's bathroom. Our friend Leonard suggested that it might be because the necklace was a "gift" meant for Mitch, but since Christine had claimed it, whoever gave it got mad and started to wreak havoc in the office.

Mitch learned more about this when she slept at Christine's house. Before going to bed, Christine took off the necklace and showed it to Mitch.

"This is such a lucky thing to have, Mitch," Christine remarked. "I'm so glad you found it."

She placed it carefully on the computer table, which was by the foot of her bed. As far as Mitch knew, Christine did not wake up in the night and Mitch slept like a log.

When morning came, Mitch woke and saw the necklace on her pillow. It was carefully placed so that the heart-shaped pendant would clearly be seen. When she picked it up, she noticed that it was warm and inviting, like the air-conditioning in the room hadn't affected it in any way. A chill ran down her spine as she held it in her hands. She wanted to throw it but something prevented her, urging her to keep it.

When Christine woke up, Mitch told her what happened. At first Christine was surprised but after a few moments she asked for the necklace. Mitch reluctantly gave it back and Christine kept it in one of her drawers.

Since then, Christine wouldn't give us back the necklace, however much we begged her. She stopped using the necklace, though, and insisted that she kept it in a safe place, ready to give it back to the real owner when she claimed it.

A few days later, Mitch came to me and showed me the necklace. The pendant seemed to sparkle brighter than before as it dangled on its chain. But Mitch wasn't happy; in fact she looked afraid.

"How did you get that back from Christine?" I asked, my eyes never leaving the necklace.

"That's the scary thing, Paul," she replied. "I never got it back from her. I had given up trying to get Christine to give this back to me.

"But this morning I found it in my drawer at home."

The Voices

by Anne S. Hortelano

❖ ❖ ❖

The house stood silent. Nestled among tall acacia trees, its elegant form was visible through the ornate iron grill fence surrounding the property. The wooden shutters were open, affording passersby a glimpse of the huge chandelier that hung from the painted ceiling.

Marisa sighed as she picked up her bag. Tired from driving, the sight of the house gladdened her heart. She loved old houses and this particular one had gracefully withstood the passage of time. Her editor had thought it was a good idea to write about life in rural towns. She was fortunate to come across this house in one of her frequent trips to the South. And so there she was, bag in one hand and her laptop slung over her shoulder.

She settled in one of the smaller rooms of the house, its furnishings simple and comfortable – a writing table near the huge window, a full-length oval mirror in the corner, and an antique radio beside her bed that, surprisingly, still worked. The house was large and airy, though somewhat gloomy.

Maybe because no one has lived here for a long while, she mused. She chuckled at the ludicrously low rent charged by the apprehensive caretaker of the house.

All through the night, the house creaked, and unfamiliar sounds wove in and out of her dreams. Voices from different corners of the room filled her slumber. In the morning, she assured herself that it was only first night jitters in a new surrounding.

Tonight would be better, she promised herself.

Marisa spent the day getting the feel for the house. She explored the whole house, its nooks and crannies, and especially the grounds around the house. Though the house was well maintained, the same cannot be said for the garden. Weeds had overgrown what was once a well-tended lawn. She shivered when she passed by the moss-riddled Dita tree growing near the house's entrance. She didn't know why.

Her first week passed uneventfully enough. She established a routine of exploring the town during the daytime and writing at night. With the radio playing soft music in the background, she pounded away at her computer, compiling and saving her increasing notes. She would have loved to interview the residents, mostly the older ones, but they were suspicious of newcomers there.

Maybe when they got to know me, they'd open up, she thought. She didn't notice the pitying looks she got from the men and women as she passed by.

During her second week, she was busily writing as usual when a faint sound intruded into her consciousness. It seemed like it was coming from the next room. She listened for a moment but everything was silent except for her breathing.

You're imagining things, Marisa. It's only the wind, she thought. She tried to continue but every time she started typing, the sound would come, and stop when she stopped to listen. She looked out the window but could see nothing. As she turned away, she saw a dark form hanging from the Dita tree. Her heart skipped but when she peered to look again, it was gone. Finally, she couldn't concentrate anymore so she decided to lie down on the bed.

And it came again, the sound of an infant's imperceptible wails, as if coming from the earth itself. Marisa was unnerved.

"It's the wind, the wind," she kept repeating until she fell asleep.

Morning brought blessed relief. Sunlight streamed into the huge windows, illuminating the house. Everything seemed so serene, prompting Marisa to doubt if she had really heard or had just imag-

ined the wailing the previous night. She couldn't forget, though, the form she saw on the tree. Careful not to look at the dreaded tree, Marisa left the house and spent the day around the village again. She came back just as dusk came. The house was dark and imposing. She quickened her steps but as she passed by the Dita tree, a cold, malevolent voice whispered audibly in her ears.

"I'm still alive... alive," it said.

Marisa ran and took the stairs two steps at a time. She was breathless when she reached her room. She turned on all the lights in the house.

Let the voice come into a house blazing with light, she thought.

Gathering her wits, Marisa went back to her room and turned on the antique radio to dispel the fear that was growing inside her. She was still debating what do when she was suddenly became aware of someone weeping bitterly, the sound getting louder and louder.

Lord, it can't be, she prayed silently. Marisa was aghast when she realized the sound was coming from the radio! She was shaking all over and felt as if her head had grown to several times its size. She couldn't take it anymore, and she shouted hysterically.

"I'm NOT afraid of you! I'm NOT afraid!" she cried.

Suddenly a black force like a cold wind hit her chest and engulfed her, almost suffocating her.

In the morning, the blazing lights, the antique radio playing on and on, and the front door flung wide open were the only hints of Marisa's hasty retreat. The story about the voices of the *unica hija* lovers that hung from the Dita tree, the aborted fetus thrown in the buried well, and the eventual suicide didn't reach Marisa anymore.

Oh well, the townspeople reasoned, *the voices wouldn't let anybody stay anyway.*

Once again, the house stood silent, its impassive façade staring at the deepening dusk.

The House in San Lorenzo

by Thomas Eugene S. Tan

❖ ❖ ❖

I tried to keep my hand steady as I raised the match to light the cigarette that dangled from my lower lip. I smelled the phosphorous, deep and pungent, and felt the warmth of the yellow flame bathe my face. The tip of the cigarette lit and a rush of smoke filled my lungs. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and let it all go.

But the cold stayed.

My arms were rippled with a blanket of gooseflesh, starting from my elbows and traveling up to my wrist. Despite the early morning light beginning to pierce the darkness, despite the song of the ricebird perched on a tree somewhere above my head, and despite the distant sound of some motorist warming up his car, I felt unutterably alone.

I gave a sharp laugh at that. "This would make a pretty good title for a drama movie," I thought, "Cold and Alone at 5 a.m. on a slow street in San Lorenzo." But the laugh was a hollow one, and my false humor quickly evaporated.

"Hey, you okay?"

I was sitting on the curb in front of the house, barefoot and clad only in shorts and a T-shirt. I could feel the stony hardness of the gravel as I pressed my toes down on the street. I flicked ash onto the grass beside me and ignored the concerned voice behind me.

"Hey," she said, placing her hand on my shoulder. I turned up

slowly from my hunched-over position. Through the cloud of smoke I saw warm anxiety radiate from those big brown eyes.

"Yeah," I said, thoughtfully.

She smiled.

"No," I said, truthfully.

She looked at me with confusion. "What are you talking about?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Well, come on inside. The others are just waking up."

I looked up at her and said nothing.

"Well?" This time the concern had turned to irritation.

I casually flicked another lump of pale ash. A chill gripped my insides and ran up my spine. My throat locked and felt like it was stuffed with mucous, thicker than ever before, forcing me to whisper in a ragged voice, "He's still in there."

My night of terror had started the night before, during a sleepover party with some of my friends. The only house big enough to accommodate all six of us while affording some measure of privacy was my friend Pat's. It was an old house, one of the first built in San Lorenzo Village. Little had changed in it since its construction, but it aged well. The plumbing and lighting could use some work, but it was livable.

We had set up "camp" in the living room. Surrounded by bowls of Doritos and Cheese Curls, we were set for a night of raucous movie watching and binge eating. As was always the case with a mixed boy/girl group, there was some discussion over what video to watch: *Terminator* or *Titanic*.

As you can imagine, being an evenly matched group of three boys and three girls, the ladies won. Sighing, I reconciled myself to

watching one of the "chickest" chick-flicks ever made and pressed the PLAY button on the VCR.

Then the power went out.

A loud groan rose from the group, and I fell back on the couch under a hail of pillows and Doritos.

Amidst the carnage, Pat stood up and suggested the ancient camp past time. "Hey," she said with a wicked grin. "Let's tell ghost stories. I've got a juicy one about this very house!"

The girls went for it, but us guys were too busy guffawing at the corniness of it all.

"Come on!" one of the guys roared. "Let's play truth or dare!"

"No," Cara said, she of the wide brown eyes. "I want to hear this."

"Well, count me out," I said with a snort. "You guys go ahead then. I'm going to get some sleep."

I grabbed the nearest blanket, wrapped it around myself, and burrowed into the folds of the old couch.

"You're not going to get much sleep lying on that," Pat said teasingly. "The ghost is gonna getcha!"

"Shut up," I said pleasantly and waved her off. I didn't believe in ghosts anyway.

I don't know how long it was before I fell asleep, but I woke up after what felt like only a couple of minutes. I looked around, and in the darkness saw the vague shapes of all my friends in various stages of recline all over the living room. Soft snoring filled the air, and the strong smell of cigarettes permeated the room. Kojak, the little gray shih-tzu who had been sleeping on top of me, yelped as I pushed him off to find my watch.

"4:30," I muttered to myself. I had been asleep for only four hours. Didn't all the books say that you must have a minimum of eight hours? Kojak stared at me for a moment and gave a wide-mouthed

yawn. In the cold, lonely hours of the early morning, his yawn was as loud as a siren.

"Shh!" I scolded him. "I'm going to try to get back to sleep."

He cocked his head to one side. I stared at him in what little moonlight was available.

"Aww," I muttered, as I crept wearily back onto the couch. "Stupid dog."

My joints ached as I pulled up the covers again and I felt a weariness fall over me. I stared up at the inky black ceiling and tried to discern what secrets hid there. As my eyes began to close, the solid silence of the morning gave way to a loud creaking sound that came from my left.

I sat up and looked around. "Who's there?" I asked.

Silence greeted me. I looked around slowly. My friends were all still in their prone positions and looked dead to the world. This time, I became aware of just how dark the room was. The moonlight streaming through the window was concentrated on a tiny patch in the center of the room. Kojak was lying in the middle of the patch staring intently at the door. The corners of the room were dark and secretive, daring me to stand up and peer into them.

"Kojak," I said softly. "What is—?"

He turned to look at me forlornly. He stared at me for a brief second before turning back to stare at the door.

"There's nothing there—"

But I was wrong.

The door, which had been shut tightly a moment before, had swung open. Through the archway, I could see the rock garden that pretended to be a front lawn. Beyond it, trees stood like shadowy sentries.

I immediately became wary. I knew that some houses in the area had recently been broken into. I stood up.

"Hello?"

There was no reply, save for Kojak's whine.

I stood rooted in my spot and stared at the doorway intently. The trees rustled in the breeze. I let out the breath I had been holding and shook my head with a soft chuckle. "Just the wind," I thought.

Suddenly, the air began to thicken. It became difficult to breathe and I started to gasp for air. A cold wet feeling ran up my spine, gooseflesh up my arms. My joints locked into place, and I found myself unable to move. I became aware of, not silence exactly, but an eerie absence of sound. My eyes bulged and began to tear as a feeling of extreme wrongness gripped me.

"What's happening–?" I choked out. That was when I looked up at the doorway.

There he stood. I saw an outline of a man, tall and wiry. From what I could make out, he was wearing a simple set of pajamas that hung loosely on his bony frame. A shock of white hair rimmed his head.

He began to walk towards me in a shuffling gait. Step by excruciating step he came closer, and closer. And closer.

I couldn't move.

As he approached me, I realized that he would soon pass through the patch of moonlight. I closed my eyes. Something inside me told me that I did not want to see him. I began to breathe faster, the ragged sounds of my breathing echoed the scraping sounds of his steps. Something made me open my eyes.

He was in the patch of moonlight. I gave out a scream that died in my throat.

The entire lower half of his face was gone. Where his jaw should have been, there was only empty darkness. One eye bulged open at me, the color of spoilt milk. The other eye was gone, a gaping hole in its place.

He shuffled relentlessly towards me. The silence was deafening. And the smell was terrible—rotted eggs mixed with the sickening smell of bile. And I still couldn't move.

I screamed that silent scream again as he got closer. He was only five feet away when he reached out his hand towards me. The hand was the wrinkled pale skin of an old man, lined with liver spots and tipped with yellowing, cracked nails. His eye bulged even more as he stepped closer.

Kojak, that dear stupid dog, bit my ankle and I yelped. The sharp pain was enough to get me moving. I dashed for the far side of the room.

The old man did not even notice me. But he groaned, and kept walking towards the couch.

And through the couch.

And right through the wall.

In that instant, my sense of hearing returned and the air thinned again. In the corner where I was hunched over, I breathed a sigh of relief and patted Kojak's head.

I stared at the spot the old man had vanished through, grabbed a pack of cigarettes, and ran out into the street.

The early morning cold greeted me, creating gooseflesh on my skin, but I didn't care. I sat on the lonely dark curb and shakily pulled out a cigarette.

There I stayed until Cara came out, about an hour later.

I got the story from her over cigarettes soon after she came out. Turns out it was the very story Pat had told the night before.

Apparently, fifteen years ago the house belonged to an old rich lawyer. He had taken a wife some twenty years his junior. A trophy wife, one would say. But the lawyer thought she loved him and was blissfully unaware of her chronic unfaithfulness.

One day, he came home early from a business trip. Hoping to surprise his young bride, he opened the front door with a flourish. His smile of greeting died on his lips as he saw his wife cavorting with his young junior partner.

Caught, the pair began to make excuses, but he would have none of it. Instead, with a slow tip of his head, he sadly walked up the stairs to his bedroom. He came back down moments later sporting his never-been-used shotgun. He shot her first, her lover second, before finally placing the barrel under his jaw and pulled the trigger.

To this day, his ghost walks through the living room every morning, reliving his own personal hell.

As Cara finished the tale, dawn finally cracked, painting the dark landscape in a vibrant orange hue. It did nothing to dispel the lingering fear that still clutched at me.

"Come on," she said, pulling my arm. "Let's go inside."

I stood up and stared at the sun. I dropped the spent cigarette butt into the gutter and grounded it out with the heel of my bare foot.

The pain was an exquisite reminder of how alive I was.

Smiling in the morning glow, I turned towards that haunted house, and I knew I would never step foot in it again.

Double Proof

by Yugel Losorata

❖ ❖ ❖

Billy and his younger brother Derrick have been hearing quite a number of spooky stories from their mother that seemed to indicate that there was a ghost copycat or '*unyango*' inside their house. Billy was aching to prove if it was true, and so one day he decided to challenge the alleged ghost to appear before him or at least show a believable sign of paranormal activity.

One morning, over a cup of coffee, Billy suggested, "I have had enough of Mom telling us about her ghostly apparitions. I dare whoever that ghost is to prove he's real by doing us a favor."

"What favor?" Derrick inquired.

Billy drained his coffee before proceeding. "This mug will be the key. I'll leave this mug right here and see if the ghost is real enough to move it. Of course, we'll both go out and won't be back until later this evening."

Billy fixed the table and put the mug in a spot he'd surely remember. Derrick just laughed at Billy's scheme. "I doubt that would do. The ghost would rather scare you while you're sleeping in your room."

"Oh, really," Billy replied mockingly. "Well, it's like this. I actually don't believe there's a ghost in here. We've been residing in this house for ten years now and none of us have seen a ghost the way mommy has lately claimed."

Derrick looked straight into his big brother, "Are you saying that Mommy's just making up stories?"

"Not really. But who knows? Mommy's been in a fit of depression ever since she discovered that Dad had a mistress. That would explain why she had been experiencing ghostly apparitions allegedly done by '*unyangos*'. It's all just an eerie manifestation resulting from her discovery of Daddy's inappropriate affair with another woman."

"Stop that, Billy. Let's not make this morning bad by talking about dad's dark side. Let's pack up and leave and see later if your mug proves that a ghost is in our midst."

Billy and Derrick's parents were out of town together, so the brothers were sure that no one would clean the table or pick up the mug.

"What time will you be home tonight, Derrick?" Billy asked.

Derrick thought for a second, "Probably around 11. I'll be at a friend's birthday party but I don't feel like staying up too late, so expect me to be home at around that time.'

"Okay, see you then."

Billy went to see his girlfriend and during their date had the chance to talk about his mom's dose of scary tales.

"You know, my mom's telling us creepy stories lately. A few weeks back, she claimed to have seen my dad rushing to the bathroom, only to realize that daddy wasn't coming home that night.

"Not only that. Just last week, she said she saw me go upstairs. But when she went up to my room, I wasn't around. I was actually at a neighbor's party.

"She also heard someone whisper in her ear while she was half-awake and felt my dad caress her head one night, despite the fact that Daddy had sworn he was sound asleep the whole time."

Being a believer of the 'third eye phenomenon' herself, Billy's girlfriend was quite convinced about the stories of Billy's mom. Billy,

however, insisted on his own perception about such a string of out-of-this-world occurrences.

"Well, I may be too cynic about this whole thing but I think it's all about Mom going through a kind of depression, which you already know why," he said, referring to his dad's philandering act. His girlfriend could only shrug.

It was around 10 p.m. when Billy arrived home that Saturday night. He entered the house using his duplicate key and went straight to the bathroom to clean up. While washing his face, he suddenly remembered about the 'mug dare.' He immediately went to the dinning room to check if it had moved. Much as he expected, it did not. The mug was still there in the very spot where he had left it that morning.

A few minutes later, he saw his brother Derrick enter the house and sit on the sofa, exhausted or drunk from the party. Derrick would usually do that, coming in without saying a word or smiling at anyone.

Billy smiled at seeing his brother sit lazily on the sofa. He could see the back of Derrick's head slouched upon the upholstery. He broke the ice and started a conversation, "I told you, Derrick, there isn't a ghost here. Look at the mug. It didn't move a bit from where I left it. The ghost had all the time to move that or even break it if he was real. Mommy's just feeling terribly bad about dad, which led her to hallucinate about ghosts."

Just to make sure that the mug hadn't moved, Billy went closer to the table and picked up the mug. He suddenly felt goose bumps the moment he touched it. The mug was half-filled with coffee! Billy distinctly remembered finishing his coffee that morning.

"Oh my God, Derrick, you won't believe this!" Billy exclaimed. His hand was quivering. Why, the black coffee was even hot! How could that be? Who had poured hot coffee in the mug?

He hurriedly put the mug down and stepped back in fright as his

mobile phone rang. Even though his heartbeat was running fast, he managed to pick up his phone and saw that the caller wasn't listed in his phone book. "Hello?" he answered.

"Yo, Billy, my phone's battery's empty. I'm here at George's place, we're drinking heavily and I don't think I can come home tonight. Say hi to the ghost for me!"

That last line, even though it sounded like a joke from a drunkard, was unbearable for Billy. He recognized the voice.

It was his brother Derrick's.

Chased

by Camille M. Bansil

❖ ❖ ❖

Though sibling rivalry is inevitable, my two sisters and I grew up with Mama's instilled virtues of solidarity and close family ties. My *Ate* (elder sister) Keith and I shared everything, from shoes to food, from clothes to secrets, from homework to problems. I got so used to that situation, to the extent that I had almost forgotten that a time would come when we had to settle down with our own families. I guess that was the primary reason why *Ate* Keith's decision to get married affected me badly.

Ate Keith settled with a guy with no permanent work. Left with no other choice, they lived in her husband's ancestral home. Their four-year stay in that house, together with the father-in-law, *Lolo* (Grandfather) Federico, proved to be a long journey of agony for *Ate* Keith.

Ate perceived the house as a battle arena between her and her father-in-law. *Ate* and *Lolo* Federico had numerous misunderstandings that sprouted from petty, childish issues. I thought that in the long run they would outgrow those fights and settle their differences. Sadly, they never did.

After a big fight with my sister, *Lolo* Federico died in his sleep (*binangungot*). His death was so unexpected and sudden that it shocked his neighbors and relatives. *Lolo* Federico was a sound, energetic man, and personally, I never entertained the thought that this rowdy man, he of deafening laughter, would die so soon.

I came over to check on my sister. My once-accommodating and

bubbly eldest sister had turned into a paranoid, or worse, a freak. She had lost a lot of weight and her eyes looked at everything with suspicion. I asked her what was going on.

"*Nandiyan pa rin siya* (He's still there)," she said softly, as if attempting to keep that statement between the two of us.

"*Ha? Ano? Sino?* (Eh? What? Who?)," I reacted, looking for more details from her.

"*Si Papa Federico. Lagi siyang bumibisita* (It's Daddy Federico. He always visits)," she said. She froze for a moment, held my hand and said, "Cams, I don't know what to do. I don't have any idea how to deal with this. *Nagpaparamdam siya* (He makes himself felt).

"Sometimes, I would hear his footsteps approach our door, then the smell of his tobacco would fill the room. There were even instances when I would hear my son's laughter, as if he was playing with somebody, *pero wala naman* (but there's no one there)."

Without a second thought, we decided that *Ate* and Kelly, my nephew, would stay at our place. During those times, I didn't really believe that ghosts existed. Horror stories were just that: stories. They were passed from mouth to mouth until people thought they were true. I didn't know from whose mouth *Ate* got the idea that *Lolo* Federico haunted the place, but I was sure that she couldn't influence my skeptical mind. The only thing I wanted was to comfort my big sister and keep her safe.

Her stay in our place proved to be just what the doctor ordered. She was gaining back her weight and she was getting better each day. She was having a lot of fun, especially the midnight chitchats we shared.

One night, *Ate* Keith and I were talking in our kitchen when we heard a vehicle being parked in our open garage. Thinking that it was her husband, *Ate* rushed to the terrace. To her surprise, her husband wasn't there, and no vehicle had arrived.

Later that night, I was alone in the kitchen finishing my school

project. Everyone in the house was asleep. I suddenly heard an automobile being parked in front of our house, and it sounded like the one *Ate* Keith and I heard earlier. The howling of our dogs followed it. Then soft steps, which came nearer and nearer, echoed in my head. I then heard lithe knocks on the terrace door. When I checked to see who was there, I saw nothing but complete darkness.

I closed up and went to our room. I couldn't explain the sudden coldness that brushed my arm. It gave me an irrepressible horror, which I promptly ignored, and I forced myself to sleep.

A few moments later, *Ate* Keith's cell phone rang. After a few more rings, I heard her reach for the gadget. "'Low," she said, half awake.

We all woke up hearing *Ate*'s terrifying squeal. We saw my sister softly crying while she gazed at her cell phone, which was a few steps away. She had thrown her phone, I guess, and it had shut off.

Mama tightly hugged *Ate* and tried to convince her to tell us what happened, but *Ate* gave no reply.

I turned my sister's cell phone back on to check who had called her. I was dismayed when I saw that the number had not registered in the 'received calls' list.

We suddenly took notice of the banging of the door in my parents' room. Kelly was left unattended there. *Ate*'s eyes went wide as she screamed, "*Ma! Si Kelly! Ang anak ko!* (My son!)" We all rushed out the room.

We caught Kelly sleepwalking on the terrace. *Ate* Keith firmly grabbed her son and woke him up. Kelly looked at the empty space in front of our house, waved his left hand and said, "Babay Wowo, Babay."

Mama asked Kelly where his *Wowo* (*Lolo*) was. Kelly pointed at the road and said, "'Yun o (There!)!"

A cold wind suddenly breezed through, followed by the weeping

of our dogs. A familiar smell of tobacco chilled my veins, and I remembered the conversation I had with my sister. *Ate*'s cell phone, which was locked in my hand, began to ring again. *Ate* begged me not to answer the call.

But I did. I heard nothing but silence from the other line. Just as I decided to cut the call, a familiar noisy and echoing laughter filled my ear. *Lolo* Federico was the one on the other line, delivering the same laugh I used to hear from him when he was alive.

The following day, we offered prayers for his spirit. *Ate* uttered her own prayers, apologizing for their numerous misunderstandings. She promised to take good care of Kelly, *Lolo* Federico's favorite grandchild.

That was almost two weeks ago. Fortunately, we haven't experienced any scary situations like that again. We hope that finally, *Lolo* Federico's spirit was at peace.

And no, *Ate* Keith hasn't turned on her cell phone.

January 29

by Ellery Von R. Biay

❖ ❖ ❖

It was our *barkada's* (clique's) habit to sleep over at Connie's house whenever we attended an or party. We enjoyed being together, and we loved sharing ghost stories. The eleven of us got together one night just for fun.

When the clock signaled that it was a quarter past eleven, we agreed to call it a night. All of us slept in the living room.

"*Paki patay naman ang ilaw, di kasi ako sanay matulog na meron niyan* (Please turn off the lights, I'm not used to sleeping with them on)," Euma told Harry. When we were all settled in, Harry turned off the lights.

I don't know why I felt uneasy that night. Even though my eyes were closed, it took me a while to finally get to sleep. But just as I was about to enter deep sleep, a rattling sound woke me. It was a hard clattering sound produced by gnashing teeth, and I was pretty sure that it came from Harry on my right. When I decided to wake him, it stopped. I didn't bother him anymore and I was able to get to sleep.

After an hour or two, a terrible shriek woke all of us. My friends and I were shocked and startled. We saw Harry sitting on the couch, pale as death. He was shaking and perspiring. We comforted him and calmed him down.

"*Nanaginip ako* (I was dreaming)," he said.

"*Sa tingin ko masamang panaginip iyan kasi narinig kitang parang*

nangangalit ng ngipin (I think it was a bad dream because I heard you gnashing your teeth)," I said.

"*Narinig ko rin ang tunog na iyon* (I also heard that sound)," Toni added.

We learned that we had all heard that sound in the middle of the night. We turned to Harry to listen to his story.

"*Madilim, tapos may mga pulang mata na lumitaw sa panaginip ko. Nakakatakot na nakatingin sila sa akin. Papalapit nang papalapit sa akin ang mga mata nang makarinig ako ng mga pagtawag na hindi naman maintindihan. Kakaiba iyon at iyon ang nagpanginig sa akin* (It was dark, then some red eyes appeared in my dreams. It was terrifying the way they looked at me. As the eyes drew nearer and nearer, I heard a summons, which I could not understand. It was unusual and it made me tremble)," said Harry.

He paused and took a few seconds to draw a breath. All of us waited, curious and frightened.

"*Hindi ko na matandaan ang iba pero nakita ko na lang ang sarili ko na nakatayo sa gitna ng sementeryo. Wala na ang mga pulang mata pero ang mga pagtawag ay napalitan ng nakakabinging hikbi ng mga hirap na tao. Nakakatakot iyon! Lumipas ang ilang segundo pagkatapos ay lumitaw ang isang lalaking suot-suot ang kanyang pamburol sa tabi ng isang puno. Nakita ko ang nabubulok niyang mukha. Nagulat ako at nagising na rin sa wakas!* (I cannot remember the rest but then I found myself standing in the middle of a cemetery. The red eyes were gone but the summons had been replaced by the deafening cries of agonized men. It was scary! Seconds passed and then a man in his burial clothes appeared beside a tree. I saw his rotting face. It shocked me and woke me up at last!)," he said.

"*Magpasalamat ka at nagising ka* (Be grateful that you were able to wake up)," said Mharvie.

After a while, Eman asked Harry, "*Sumigaw ka ba sa panaginip mo?* (Did you cry out in you dreams?)"

"*Hindi* (No)," Harry answered.

No one else asked questions, and so Harry continued, "*Iyong patay sa panaginip ko, nakita ko siya nang magising ako. Nakita ko siya ng totoo, nakatayo sa TV set. Hindi siya gumagalaw pero nakatingin siya sakin. Nawala siya nang sumigaw ako.* (The dead man in my dreams, I saw him when I woke up. He was real, standing by the TV set. He was not moving but he was looking at me. He disappeared when I cried out)."

After he said this, no one attempted to even glance at the TV set. We were speechless, sitting there and holding each other tight. We all got goose bumps, and Harry was panting and looking pale.

Roeden noticed that the lights in the living room were on. "*Sinong nagbukas ng ilaw?* (Who turned on the lights?)" he asked.

Nobody answered, and we felt even more afraid.

It was then that we remembered that that day was the death anniversary of Harry's father, January 29, 2004.

Nurse

by Leonileda L. Leong

❖ ❖ ❖

Julie Marangga was a nurse at the general hospital. She had heard many stories about the hospital she worked in – some were scary, most were sad, but she never paid them any mind. Had she at least heeded their warnings, she might have been better prepared for what happened later. Now she's in a coma.

"Julie, it's almost 10 o'clock. Leave that to the night shift," the head nurse told her that fateful evening. "Why don't you go home early? You'll be celebrating your first paycheck with your mother tomorrow."

"It's okay, *manang*, I'll just finish this," she responded. She seemed to love her work.

"Don't take the elevator at night," Julie's co-workers had advised her. "Besides, the stairs are healthier for you."

It was past 10 o'clock that night when Julie, together with another nurse from a different station, boarded the elevator on the top floor. She had clocked out and was on her way home. The hospital halls were quiet; visitor hours had ended more than an hour ago, and the night shift had long settled in. Before the elevator doors closed, a doctor called out to them.

"Hold the elevator," he said.

Julie stopped the door from closing. The doctor nodded his thanks and pressed the 'G' button upon entering. As the doors closed, Julie saw a child making his way to the elevator.

"*Doc, sandali, may bata pang sasakay,* (Doc, wait, a child wants to get in)," Julie said.

The doctor hurriedly pressed the 'Door Close' button. "*Huwag mong pansinin ang batang iyan, patay na siya. Nakita mo ba ang wristband na suot niya? Iyan ang kulay na suot ng mga bangkay sa morgue,* (Don't mind that kid, he was already dead. Did you see the wristband he was wearing? That's the color the bodies wear in the morgue)," said the doctor.

Julie suddenly could not speak.

The nurse beside her calmly extended her hand and asked, "Like this one?"

Julie saw that the wristband the nurse was wearing was exactly the same as that of the child's. Julie fainted. The next day she went into a coma.

It was said that the week before, another nurse had been rushed to the hospital, heavily bleeding after an accident. The nurse didn't make it.

Hospitals have more than enough death stories, but that doesn't help Mrs. Marangga, who doesn't know whether she should be grateful that her daughter was alive but in a coma.

The doctor accompanied her to Julie's hospital room. He was used to these things already, but what was he going to tell Julie's mother?

The Angry Ghost

by Arlyn S. Balahay

❖ ❖ ❖

My Uncle had supernatural powers. He was a faith healer. He could foretell what would happen to you; he could read your thoughts; he could cure sick people and had healed many of them. But what was most amazing was that he could prolong a person's life and he could bring a dead person back to life. He did not believe in modern medicine.

Auntie Mila, my Uncle's wife, had been suffering from breast cancer for more than a year already. But according to my Uncle, if my Auntie was brought to the hospital and operated upon, her life would be shortened; she would only live for a couple of months.

My Uncle's powers were very strong during the 70s. Even then, his powers were not absolute; they had limitations. What was ironic was that he couldn't cure any member of his family. Therefore it was his comrade, Ma'am Rose, who also possessed healing powers, that performed the faith healing on my Auntie. Under my Uncle's supervision, of course.

My Auntie was soon getting well, but her recovery was temporary unless she followed a strict regiment: no eating meat and stale fish, no drinking hard liquor, no over fatigue, and the like. She was advised to eat only fresh vegetables and fresh fish. Months passed and she thought she was cured, and so she went back to her usual lifestyle, eating the prohibited foods and did house chores. Eventually she got sick again.

To save his wife's life, Uncle constructed a tomb for her. This was

intentional; according to him, it was an "antidote" for a dying person. Miraculously, she got better; she became energetic and active.

But my Auntie was so hardheaded, or maybe believed that my Uncle would always prolong her life, that she neglected to observe her diet. Her health deteriorated again. Her afflicted breast started to bleed and became an open wound. Consequently, it became rotten and began emitting a strong foul odor.

Unfortunately, the good spirits behind my Uncle and Ma'am Rose's powers refused to heal her again. According to them, they had already helped her, and it should have been enough. Auntie was left with no alternative but to suffer through the pain.

Auntie stayed with her daughter, Ate Lea, in the second floor of their big house. My Uncle occupied the ground floor. Ate took care of her since Auntie's other siblings were living in Mindanao. Auntie was isolated in her room because Ate Lea's family could not stand the bad smell. Ate Lea or her son Harry would bring her food and clean her open wound from time to time.

Sometimes, especially during the evenings, my Auntie would shout if there was anything she wanted. After a while, this began to irritate Ate Lea and Harry, and they would say bad things to her. Since Auntie was bedridden and helpless, she could not do anything but cry and endure their harsh words.

The days passed and she got worse; she could no longer speak but she could still open her eyes. Ants were seen crawling around her body. She looked dead but she was still breathing. Everybody was worried; they knew that this was unusual. They consulted Ma'am Rose and she told them that Auntie refused to die; her body had already given up but her spirit did not want to leave yet. She did not want to die unless her grandson, Harry, went with her in death. This made them all shiver with fear.

They waited a few days, but she was still alive. To ease her suffering, her family decided to end it. Since my Uncle could not bear to see his wife in that dreadful condition, it was left to Ma'am Rose to perform euthanasia on Auntie Mila.

Ma'am Rose performed a ritual; she sprinkled rock salt over my Auntie's body, recited a Latin prayer, and finally she sprinkled blessed water. Minutes later, Auntie died. Tears were seen on her cheeks. Unbelievably, her appearance changed, from being a big woman her body became a thin one. She had become almost unrecognizable. Some have said that an evil spirit had inserted itself into her body, while others claimed that she had become a witch and that was why she did not die; whatever the reason, we never found out why. Maybe Uncle knew but he did not mention anything.

After a few nights, our relatives would see Auntie in their house, wearing a black dress and grinning. Sometimes, they would hear her moans of anguish, or they could smell her odor. The ghost still wanted to get Harry, or Ate Lea. Ate Lea and her family could no longer sleep and they kept seeing her angry face. They often saw her in the prayer room, sitting beside other people and waving her hands. Sometimes she would interrupt their sleep by turning off the electric fan. Then the electric fan will turn on by itself, and they would see the button being pressed. There was even the clicking sound of it being turned on. It made them scream in the middle of the night.

They even invited teenagers to sleep at their house, hoping that with all the commotion, they would be safe from the ghost. During midnight, while the people were asleep, the hauntings would continue. The ghost swore to rest only if Ate Lea or Harry died.

Ma'am Rose told Harry and Ate Lea to wear red clothes so that the ghost could not get them. Gradually, the horrible nights lessened. It took almost a year before everything was back to normal.

This scary tale had become popular in the nearby villages, and even reached Manila. Auntie even visited us, even though we were in Bulacan.

One night, my husband and I slept at my sister's house. My husband Gary lounged outside on the veranda while the rest of us happily played *tong- its* (a card game). After a while, he came back inside, shaking. We asked him what had happened.

He told us that while he was lounging outside, he heard Auntie's

voice calling John, my sister's son. The nearby dogs barked and were restless, as though they could sense something unusual. When nobody answered her call, she knocked violently on the gate, and then angrily left, saying, "Okay, you're all indifferent, you don't give me attention anymore!"

Upon hearing that, Gary stood up and looked at the gate. When he saw her back (she had just turned away), he felt his hair stand on end.

On that same night, I dreamt about her. She was there by the gate, calling me, as if she were alive. I awoke, terrified. Through the window of my bedroom, I peered at the gate where she had been standing in my dream but I saw no one. Still, I woke Gary because I felt goose bumps all over my body.

And do you know what happened the next day? My sister and her two kids suddenly got sick. They all had a fever. We talked to Auntie through our prayers and ardently asked her to spare all of us, especially the kids, from her anger and vengeance because she had no reason to be angry with us. We had always been nice and respectful to her. And above all, we considered her as our second mother. My sister and her kids got well the next day.

Auntie, we pray for you and your soul's eternal peace wherever you are. We love you. And I also pray for your forgiveness for daring to write your story.

The Building

by Jonathan E. Salazar

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In 1971, an enterprising couple bought a lot near Quezon Avenue and established a printing press. Through the couple's hard work and determination, the four-story building that was built there still stands to this day and houses one of the more successful printing and publishing companies in the country.

The building had undergone a lot of renovations over the years, but the strange experiences that have occurred in its hallways and offices have not changed. Some of them were unbelievable but many attest that they actually happened.

Ground floor

Mr. Zamora was hired to operate the printing machines. During one lunch break, he decided to take a nap. He lay down to sleep behind the big paper rolls. He was fast asleep and he did not notice that it was almost time for work. He felt someone shake him, trying to wake him up. When he opened his eyes, he saw an old woman in elegant clothes telling him that it was time to get back to work. When he got up to shake away his drowsiness, the woman was gone. He asked his co-workers if they saw the woman but they did not see anyone that fit her description.

Mr. Zamora went to the accounting department to get his first paycheck a few days later. In the lobby hung a painting. He did a

double take when he saw that the person in the painting looked familiar. He realized that it was the old woman who had woken him up days ago. He asked his co-workers about the painting, and they told him that she was the owner's late wife. He suddenly felt a chill in his bones. Never again did he sleep during lunch break.

Second floor

It was already 7:30 p.m. and Ms. Cruz was ready to turn in for the day. She had logged a few hours of overtime to finish the paperwork that had accumulated on her desk. She got up, picked up her things, and headed to the HR Department to meet her co-worker.

While walking down the badly lit hallway, she noticed someone walking towards her. When the figure was a few feet away and she got a better look at him, she got the shock of her life. It was a man's body, but it had no head! She backed up against the wall, screamed, and passed out.

When Ms. Cruz woke up, she was in the guardhouse. Her friend had heard her scream. When she saw Ms. Cruz sprawled on the floor, she called the guard for help. They didn't believe Ms. Cruz when she told them what she saw. It was months before she could muster the courage to do overtime work again.

Third floor

Mr. Dantes had to work that Sunday to meet the deadline of the book he was proofreading. While walking down the hall heading to the bathroom, he noticed a man in white inside another office. He was bent over, as if looking for something in a desk. When Mr. Dantes passed by that office again after coming from the bathroom, the man in white was still there, but looking for something in another desk. Mr. Dantes shrugged, thinking it was just someone who was doing overtime like him.

The next day, he asked the occupants of that office if one of them did some overtime that Sunday. Mr. Dantes' face paled after hearing that no one had and that the door to the office was locked all weekend and wasn't opened until that morning.

Fourth Floor

Mrs. Mendoza and her group of authors had been laboring on their manuscript for almost a week. One night, they were rushing to beat the deadline to include their book in the next school year. It was late in the evening when Mrs. Mendoza and her co-workers agreed to take a break. Her eyes closed as soon as she lay down on her makeshift bed.

Later, she heard someone typing heavily on a computer keyboard, and at a very fast pace. She pinched herself to make sure she wasn't dreaming, because she saw a white figure typing like hell on the computer! She closed her eyes and uttered the Lord's Prayer. When she opened her eyes after finishing the prayer, the figure was gone.

The owners have had their building blessed many times but the sightings have continued, except for the one on the first floor. They had given up and had accepted these "permanent tenants." They just cautioned their employees to say a prayer if they see or feel their presence. Maybe some day these tenants would be able to move on.

The Man In The Chapel

by Jocelyn Anne E. Perez

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After spending All Saints' Day at the memorial park to remember those who went ahead of us, my husband and I decided to join a Prayer Vigil for the Souls at the House of Prayer. This prayer vigil for the souls was done yearly. However, this was my first time to join the group, even though my husband has been an active crusader.

Lighted candles, offered by the crusaders who have had their prayer vigil ahead of us that night, illuminated the chapel. Those praying knelt in front of the altar and a piece of paper was given to them. The names of departed friends and loved ones were written on the paper, so that the people holding vigil could include them in their prayers.

As we waited outside the chapel, we chatted with some friends. When it was our turn for the vigil, just before midnight, our names were called. I knelt between my husband and my brother-in-law, who was leading the vigil.

When we reached the middle of the rosary, where each bead represented a name of the departed, I heard a moaning sound from the chapel's gate on my left. I tried not to pay attention to it and continued with the vigil. But when I could no longer focus, I looked towards the gate and I saw a huge man in a black cape standing there.

He had no head.

I closed my eyes, hoping that he was just a product of my imagi-

nation. But when I opened them again, he was still there. He started walking and I watched where he went. He was moaning as he crossed the aisle and went to the other side of the chapel. He stood in a dark corner, making a crying sound that seemed to echo throughout the chapel.

I closed my eyes tightly and prayed for this man, even though I hardly understood how he was there, considering it was a holy ground. I tried to focus again on the prayer, noting that my husband and brother-in-law seemed not to notice the strange man or hear his crying. In doing so, I became calm once again.

When our prayer ended, I did not hear the man anymore. He was still in the corner, though, when I glanced in his direction. I asked my brother-in-law if he heard anything during the vigil, and he said he heard the moaning sound but did not look around, afraid of what he might see.

Just before I left the chapel, I looked back at the corner. He was still there!

An elder of the group told us the story behind this man. Apparently, he has been showing himself to other crusaders, especially during overnight vigils. He was said to have been a 'chop-chop' victim, and is searching for peace. He could not rest until his body and its parts are found and buried. Until then, he will continue to search and seek help from anyone who comes here.

The Nun

by Sofia Phoebe M. Marcos

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A friend of mine told me this story about her experience at her dormitory supervised by nuns.

One night, sometime past midnight, my friend woke up because she was soaked with sweat. When she was about to pull her shirt off, she noticed someone taking a bath in the bathroom. *Why was someone taking a bath so early?* she wondered. She heard the dipper drop into the pail. Next she heard the sound of a typewriter. She was surprised by that last sound because, obviously, no one would use a typewriter inside the bathroom. Worse, there wasn't a typewriter in the whole dorm! She began to panic.

A wall separated the bathroom from the double-decker beds. Since she occupied the top bunk, my friend could see the bathroom over the wall. But it was dark, and the most she could see was the shadow of whoever it was that would come out of the bathroom. She sat up in her bed, watching intently.

To her shock, she only heard footsteps exiting the bathroom; she did not even see a shadow. Frightened, she immediately lay back down. She tried to fold her legs but she couldn't. She reached for the blanket beside her but she could not pull it around her. Her whole body was frozen.

The footsteps made its way towards her, as if its owner knew that she was awake. She wanted to scream but no sound came out of her mouth. As the footsteps came closer, she closed her eyes and prayed

the Apostle's Creed. Too terrified to finish it, she ended up reciting the same phrase over and over again. Then she spoke silently to the ghost, begging it not to come near, for she was afraid that she would die sh ould she ever see one, and that she would just pray for her.

As if the ghost heard her, it turned its back and walked away. She heard the footsteps stop beside the first bed. Curious, she turned her head in that direction but she couldn't make out anything in the dark.

The next morning, she asked her fellow dorm mates if they had heard anything that night. They said yes and they had gotten scared as well. She asked the girl in the first bed what she saw. That dorm mate happened to have an active third eye since she was a kid. She said that a headless nun tried to snatch the crucifix from her bed. She, in turn, grabbed it away from her, resulting in a tug of war.

The following night, my friend was fast asleep and wasn't able to witness what had happened; her dorm mates told her about it in the morning. They heard the noises again that night. Her dorm mate in the first bed, the one with the active third eye, got up and knelt before the crucifix inside the room. She stretched out her arms and prayed. As she prayed, she felt many hands holding on to the tops of her shoulders.

The Being That Lived in the Duhat Tree

by Joan Marie C. Ison

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I was 10 years old when I encountered a being in our province in Pangasinan.

I was woken up in the middle of the night by my relatives' loud laughs. They were having a family reunion. Since I was awake, I sat in the garden swing with my baby cousin. While slowly swinging and watching the baby in my arms, I felt a cold breeze and heard a rustling in the leaves of the Duhat tree. I looked up and I saw a pair of yellow eyes stare back at me!

Frozen in my spot, I watched the eyes crawl down the tree. The eyes turned red and prepared to lunge at me! I ran to the safety of my home and inside, I watched it from the window. Its eyes were yellow again but it looked angrily at me as it climbed back up the tree.

I told my uncle about the encounter, even though he might think it was just a bad dream. I was surprised when my uncle reacted and said he had also seen the same being.

Days later, the Duhat tree was cut down. A few weeks later, our neighbor revealed that he had seen the same being when he was with his kid.

Years later I still could not forget that incident. I only found out later that it was called a *sigbin* when I was doing a term paper about supernatural creatures. It is believed to eat children and make amulets out of their hearts.